



For immediate release

Wallace returns to Usk for his 200th birthday

Welsh theatre company Theatr na nÓg is proud to be commemorating the 200th birthday of the celebrated naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace, on the 8th of January 2023 in Usk, his place of birth, with special performances of the award-winning play *You Should Ask Wallace*.

Theatre company uses story of inspirational naturalist to power up its green agenda

The organisation is committed to reducing its carbon footprint, and this show will be the catalyst to making all of its productions as carbon neutral as possible. It's fitting in this anniversary year that this show about Wallace, whose love of the natural world set him on a quest to understand our place in nature, will serve as a re-ignition in the company's green journey, as Wallace knew how preserving the fine balance of nature is vital to all living things.

The Neath-based company is delighted to be collaborating with the Usk Civic Society and Usk Church in Wales Primary School to celebrate the eminent Victorian scientist, born in Llanbadoc in 1823, who travelled the world collecting and detailing a variety of species. In 1854 he arrived in the Malay Archipelago where he independently discovered the principle of evolution by natural selection and communicated it in a letter to Charles Darwin. The theory was jointly published in a scientific article by Darwin and Wallace in 1858, and went on to change science forever. Fifteen months later Darwin published his famous book "On the Origin Of Species", in which their idea was explained in much greater detail, leading to its quicker acceptance among scientists. The play forms part of a day's activity in Usk to celebrate the Bicentenary of Wallace's birth.

The award-winning play, written by Geinor Styles in 2008, has been seen by over 50,000 people world-wide from Neath to Rio de Janeiro to Makassar in Indonesia. The actor Ioan Hefin will portray Alfred Russel Wallace in this inspiring true-life story, accessible for all ages yet illustrating one of the most important and complex theories in science.

Quote from Ioan Hefin:

"Every time I step into the Wallace costume, I'm reminded of all the components that make this such a special role to play. There are constant new discoveries within his incredible story. Being influenced to interpret the world through the eyes and vision of Alfred Russel Wallace is both a sobering and enlightening privilege."

The play will be directed by the talented Welsh actress and musician Llinos Daniel.

The production will be performed twice on January 8th, Wallace's 200th birthday, in the Victorian Courtroom at the Usk Sessions House, collaborating with Usk Civic Society. The performances will be at 3pm and 7pm.

Quote from Usk Civic Society:

In 2013 our Chairman, Tony Kear, had the idea of a permanent monument to Wallace in Usk. Since then, we have been fundraising to achieve this. The first stage, a bronze bust by local artist Felicity Crawley, set on a plinth of Portland Roach stone, was completed in November 2021 and unveiled in Twyn Square by Bill Bailey, one of Wallace's most enthusiastic champions; now, in time for Wallace's bicentenary we are about to install a second plinth of Portland Roach with an information panel setting out his wide contributions to evolutionary theory, biogeography and social causes such as land reform. We are immensely grateful to our members and supporters who have helped us raise over £15,000 to cover the costs of this project – and to several local individuals and businesses who have helped us on a pro bono basis. Theatr na nÓg is one of these and we are delighted to work with them again.

Wallace to inspire the next generation in his hometown

In addition to the public performances, the innovative theatre company, who are renowned for their high-quality theatre productions for schools and young audiences, will give performances for Usk Church of Wales Primary School. Outdoor learning workshops will be led by Ioan Hefin, taking the young people on an expedition to find out something new for themselves just like Wallace. Llinos Daniel will lead music and soundscape activities at the school in support of the new creative curriculum in Wales.

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