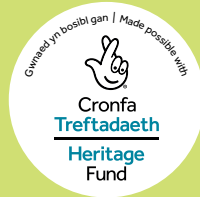


**National
Literacy
Trust**

Change your story

In partnership with



A Tale of Two Shells

Join Hazel and her ghostly guides on a
Story Quest through Pontypool Park!



2/4

Chartist History Story Quest – Complete them all!

Dear Story Questers,

Hello and welcome!

This is one of several Story Quests across South East Wales, written especially for YOU!

Each adventure introduces new characters exploring their local history, nature and brilliant buildings – and today, we're heading to Pontypool Library and Park.

As you follow in our characters' footsteps, you won't just read the story ... you'll step inside it. There'll be fun activities to complete and powerful ideas to investigate, as our adventure uncovers how ordinary people, and a protest movement called Chartism, helped change the world you live in today.

Once you've completed this Story Quest, there are more waiting for you. Can you complete them all?

FACT FILE

Two hundred years ago, only 1 in 5 men (and no women!) were allowed to vote in elections, meaning most people in Britain had no say in the laws shaping their lives. A growing movement of ordinary working people, like miners, ironworkers, labourers and shopkeepers, agreed this was unfair and created the People's Charter in 1838 to demand change. They were called Chartists. We'll find out more about the People's Charter in this Story Quest.

This Story Quest takes place around: Pontypool Library and Park, South East Wales

Starting point: Pontypool Library, Hanbury Road, Pontypool, NP4 6JL

Duration: Around 60–90 minutes

How to get there:

- **By bus:** there are stops on Hanbury Road and Clarence Street, near the library.
- **By car:** there's free car parking available on Rosemary Lane, or by Halo Pontypool Active Living Centre.
- **On foot:** please use pedestrian crossings where possible.

Activity level: A mostly flat park stroll with benches to rest along the way. There are slopes in the Italian Gardens (on the way to Stop 2) which may be unsuitable for some wheelchairs.

You will need:

- A pencil, pen or a notes app on a phone
- Something firm to lean on (a clipboard or notebook would work well)
- Your imagination
- A grown-up explorer (recommended!)
- Optional: coloured pencils, crayons or felt tip pens. You could also colour at home!

A Tale of Two Shells Story Quest Map



Meet Your Guides



Hazel

She loves people-watching in the Italian Gardens, especially if they're reading a book borrowed from Pontypool Library.



George

He lived in Pontypool and worked long hours as a carpenter. In 1839, he marched with other Chartists in the Newport Rising.



Molly

She lived in Pontypool Park House, and her wealthy husband owned the town's iron and tinplate works. She loved collecting shells.

“Hi, I’m Hazel and I love books almost as much as I love nuts! That’s why you’ll often see me in the trees of the Italian Gardens, close to Pontypool Library. I love spotting what books people have borrowed. Sometimes they sit on a park bench to read, and I peek over their shoulder to look at the illustrations.

My favourite books are by the Victorian author, Charles Dickens. He wrote stories like *Oliver Twist* and *A Christmas Carol*. They were first published in a newspaper, chapter by chapter, which meant more people could afford to read them ... how cool is that?”



FACT FILE

Before public libraries existed, working-class people had limited access to books because they were too expensive. Many families only had a bible, passed down through generations, and maybe some short story booklets called ‘chapbooks’. These were sold door to door by salesmen and could be swapped with neighbours. Today, you can borrow books, e-books and audio books for free, if you register for a library card.

OVER TO YOU

REBEL READER

It might seem odd to think of reading as an act of protest, but in the 19th Century, some politicians and rich families were against working-class people learning to read and write. Why do you think that was? Write down your thoughts.

What was the last book or comic you read?

What did you like about it?

“As well as campaigning for political rights, Chartists wanted people to have access to education. They believed communities needed schools and libraries. At Chartist meetings, newspapers, poetry and stories were read aloud so everyone could hear. Maybe they even read out some Dickens?

His characters highlighted how life was very different for the rich and poor in Victorian Britain. No wonder protest movements like Chartism happened!”



“Would you like to hear a Dickensian story ... one the great author himself could have written? It’s set right here in Pontypool, and it’s about the divide between one rich family who lived on the east side of the Afon Lwyd river, and the ordinary townsfolk who lived on the west side.



“Local Chartists lived on the west side, and were led by a man called William Jones. He was a watchmaker and also ran a beer house, or pub, where Chartist meetings were held.

“The story is called *A Tale of Two Shells*, but sadly doesn’t involve any of my favourite kind of shells ... nutshells! To tell it, I’m going to need the help of two ghosts. Hopefully the first one will be along soon.”

OVER TO YOU

STREET DETECTIVE

Head out of Pontypool Library (if you’re inside) onto the pavement and look up and down Hanbury Road. What buildings do you notice? Which ones do you think were around during the time of Chartism (1830s–1850s)?

Now find the entrance to the Italian Gardens, between the library and the war memorial. There are benches in the gardens you could sit on, to read the next part of our Story Quest.

“Oh, look!” Hazel tells you, “Here’s our first ghost, George. He’s walking the same route he used to take home from William Jones’ beer house, after Chartist meetings. He’s the first shell in our story ... because SHELL is his surname!”



“Hello, George. What’s that pamphlet you’re holding?”

“Shwmae, Hazel. This is The People’s Charter,” says George, holding it up proudly. “We printed enough copies so everyone in Pontypool could read about our six demands to Parliament.”

“Oh, I’ve heard about the Charter, but I can’t remember what the six demands were, could you tell us?”

“Of course!” George smiles. “I know them off by heart! Demand number one: Universal male suffrage, that means a vote for every man. It wasn’t fair so few people got to have their voices heard. What about people like me and my friends? We worked hard and contributed to society. We should have been allowed to vote, even though we didn’t own any land or property!”

Hazel points a paw in the air. “Was number two about votes for women?”

George coughs. “Erm, sadly not. They came much later. Two was the demand for secret ballots, meaning the right to vote in private. No man should be bribed or bullied into voting for who their landlord or employer wanted!

“Next, any man, rich or poor, should be allowed to stand for election as a Member of Parliament,” he says, “and be paid to do the job. Those were demands three and four.

“And finally, points five and six were demands for equal area sizes for voting, and for annual parliaments, otherwise known as yearly elections, to make the system fairer.”



“They do sound like fair demands,” says Hazel. “But where did you get all your energy to protest after working long hours as a carpenter? You must have been more tired than a squirrel burying nuts for winter!”

George sighs. “Yes, I was tired. I worked from dawn to dusk, six days a week, but nothing was going to change or improve if we didn’t join together and do something. Chartist meetings were important ... we had to fight for our rights! I’d hoped to be a father one day, and I wanted life to be better for my children.”

FACT FILE

George Shell was only 19 when he walked from Pontypool to Newport to meet up with around 4,000 protesters who had gathered from across South East Wales on a dark and stormy night on 4 November 1839. This event has become known as the Newport Rising. The marchers were demanding the release of fellow Chartists who were being held under arrest at the Westgate Hotel.

But like a scene out of *Star Wars*, the local authorities had set a trap for the rebel Chartists, and soldiers were waiting inside the hotel. Marchers were shot as they approached. Many were injured, and at least 22 men were killed. George was the youngest person who died that night. He’d written a letter to his parents before he left Pontypool.

After the Newport Rising, William Jones and other Chartist leaders, including the Newport leader, John Frost, were arrested, tried for treason and shipped to Australia as prisoners!

*‘...I shall this night
be engaged in a
struggle for freedom
and should it please
God to spare my life,
I shall see you soon;
but if not, grieve not
for me, I shall fall in
a noble cause...’*

OVER TO YOU

SHELL'S SENSES

Imagine you are George Shell, marching down the hill towards the Westgate Hotel in Newport, after the long walk from Pontypool. Remember it's winter and raining heavily, and you're alongside several thousand other Chartists, who share your beliefs. Your friends have been arrested for requesting the changes in the People's Charter.

What might you see, hear, smell, taste and touch? Finally, what or how would you feel? This could include physical feelings, like feeling tired or cold; and also emotions, like feeling angry or scared.

See:

Hear:

Smell:

Taste:

Touch:

Feel:



“Thanks for explaining those!” Hazel smiles. “Come on, Story Questers, it’s about time we crossed the Afon Lwyd to meet our second ghost ... and find out who, or what, is the second shell in this story. Are you coming too, George?”

George nods, and Hazel waves at him to follow as she scampers off into Pontypool Park.

OVER TO YOU

FIVE MINUTE WALK TO THE NEXT STOP

Walk through the Italian Gardens, cross the river over the bridge and head into Pontypool Park until you can see St Alban’s RC High School.

“Pontypool Park is so lovely, isn’t it George? I’m a lucky squirrel to live here and have so much space to roam. Nature is good for the soul!”

George frowns. “It wasn’t a park when I was alive. Or at least not a park everyone could enjoy. Only one couple could, and they lived in Pontypool Park House, which is now this school. Imagine that! Such a huge place for two people, while the rest of us were living in crowded houses on the other side of the river.”



“It wasn’t just the two of us,” says a voice. “We had lots of servants living in the house ... and more workers in the stables and on the land.”

George spins round to see who it is, then rolls his eyes when he recognises the person speaking. “Well, that’s alright then, isn’t it? Silly me!”

An old woman huffs. “What’s wrong with providing jobs for local people?” she asks George. “Hundreds of families in Pontypool depended on us for their living, including all the workers at my husband’s iron and tinplate works.”

“Oh! Your husband, Capel Hanbury Leigh,” says George. “I know all about him and what he thought about us Chartists! I was shot because of men like him! He helped set the trap with the soldiers in the Westgate Hotel.”



“Enough you two! I haven’t even had the chance to introduce Molly to our Story Questers yet, and already you’re arguing!” Hazel brushes off her fur. “Everyone, this is Molly Hanbury Leigh, our second ghost.”

George and Molly ignore Hazel and carry on arguing.

“You were shot because you chose to march to Newport, young man,” says Molly sharply. “That wasn’t my husband’s fault. His job as Lord Lieutenant was to keep the peace and stop an unruly mob from causing trouble.”

George shakes his head crossly. “We weren’t a mob. We were standing up for our rights and the People’s Charter! Did your husband pay his workers fairly? Did they have holidays and help when they were sick, injured or too old to work? Those were all things they could have spoken up about, if they had the right to vote.”

“Well ... not exactly,” says Molly. “But Capel did donate money to build the workhouse, and one bad winter, I paid women and children to decorate the grotto up on the hill with shells, so they could earn a few pennies for food. Perhaps you were one of those children, George? All my friends said it looked so pretty, when we had picnics there. I do love shells!”



“Picnics and shells!” says George. “You don’t have a clue what it’s like to be poor, do you? No wonder we had so much trouble convincing people like you about our Charter!”

“Well, what about me? It was very scary thinking all you Chartists might take over our house or attack us!” replies Molly.

George and Molly begin walking through the park towards the playground. Hazel shakes her head.

“I don’t think George and Molly would have got along when they were alive, if they’d ever met ... and they certainly don’t now they’re ghosts!”

“You’ve probably guessed the second shell in our story is Molly’s shell grotto. Well technically it’s a LOT of shells, including ones Molly collected herself, plus some animal teeth and bones. Ew!”



OVER TO YOU

MOTTOS & CRESTS

A motto is a short phrase to represent and unite a family, an organisation like a school or even a country. A crest is a unique family emblem, originally used like a logo to identify knights in armour. On the next page you’ll find two character cards. Molly’s card includes two mottos and crests, because she had two surnames. George didn’t have either, because only rich families had them.

Molly Hanbury Leigh

1768–1846



Home:

Pontypool Park
House

Occupation: wife &
socialite

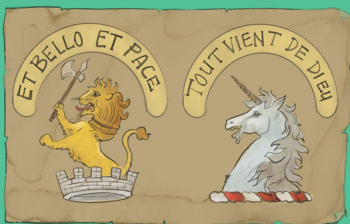
Wealth: £££

Hobbies: many, including
collecting shells &
picnics with friends

Voting rights: none

Motto: Hanbury – *Et
bello et pace* / *In war
and peace* (Latin), Leigh
– *Tout vient de Dieu*
/ *All comes from God*
(French)

Crest:



George Shell

1820–1839



Home: rented a
room in a house

Occupation: carpenter

Wealth: £

Hobbies: too tired after
work for hobbies

Voting rights: none

Motto:

Crest:

Draw a family crest for George Shell. It could be inspired by his name, his job as a carpenter, or something else. What could his motto be? Maybe something linked to his Chartist beliefs, or the letter he wrote to his parents?

What about you? What would your family motto be? Have a go at designing your own family crest!

“Did you spot the one thing George and Molly had in common?” asks Hazel. “Neither of them were allowed to vote! Perhaps they should stop arguing about their differences and talk about that instead ... and the fact squirrels can’t vote either!”



OVER TO YOU

FIVE MINUTE WALK TO THE NEXT STOP

Walk through Pontypool Park towards the playground in front of Halo Pontypool Active Living Centre. Find the musical instruments inside the playground.

“George and Molly are still squabbling, so I need to find a distraction,” Hazel sighs. “Maybe the drums and pipes in the playground will do the job ... let’s make *A Tale of Two Shells* a musical! Will you help me?”



FACT FILE

Chartists often used drums, which were useful for keeping a steady rhythm when marching. They also sang songs, which helped boost morale and a sense of community. There was even a National Chartist Hymn Book, published in 1845, and a 'Chartist Anthem' written by Ben Boucher in 1847. Here's the last verse:

*Speak with one voice, we march we rest,
And march again upon the year,
Sons of our sons are listening,
To hear the Chartist cheers,
Oh, to hear the Chartist cheers.*



OVER TO YOU

AWESOME ANTHEMS

Can you make up a tune for the verse from the 'Chartist Anthem'? Use the playground instruments to help you. Now make up your own anthem. It could be about the Chartists, or about something else important to you. Write the lyrics below:

“What’s that song you’re singing?” asks George, walking to the instruments.

“It’s very good,” says Molly. “I do love singing!”

“Me too!” George smiles. “William Jones said I had a great voice. I led the singing in all our meetings.”

“Oh, how lovely. Will you teach me one of your songs, please?” asks Molly.

George nods. “Come on, let’s walk up to Nant-y-Gollen ponds and look for dragonflies. I’ll teach you a song on the way.” He and Molly wave goodbye to Hazel and head up the path to the ponds.



“Phew! They’ve finally stopped arguing! It’s alright to disagree on politics, and to speak up about what’s important to you, but it’s also good to remember we all have things in common, like enjoying music. You did a great job of helping me. Thank you!”

OVER TO YOU

THREE MINUTE WALK TO THE LAST STOP

Walk (or march!) through Pontypool Park towards the clock tower.

“Our tale is almost at an end, Story Questers,” says Hazel, “but we have TIME for one more stop ... the Arthur Jenkins Memorial Clock! So who is Arthur and what has he got to do with our story?”

“Let’s fast forward through history from the Newport Rising in 1839 to the year 1935. That’s when a miner called Arthur Jenkins, who was born near here, became a Member of Parliament. A working-class man, elected to represent local people in government ... exactly what the People’s Charter had asked for! He was even paid a salary!



“Now that’s what I call a full circle moment! From William Jones the watchmaker, George Shell and all the Chartists, with their passion for justice and hope for change, to a memorial clock reminding us what’s possible when we collectively stand up for our democratic rights. And the easiest way to do that is to vote in elections. Remember, it’s your hard-won right!”



FACT FILE

In 1867 and 1884, voting rights were given to more men, but it wasn't until after the Suffragette movement (1903–1914) that some women were allowed to vote in the general election. You could ask a grown up about the Suffragettes if you'd like to learn more.

By 1928, all men and women over the age of twenty-one could vote, which was later reduced to eighteen in 1969.

"I hope you enjoyed *A Tale of Two Shells*. I'm off now to do more people-watching, or maybe find some nuts I buried last autumn. But before I go, there's one last activity to complete. Have fun!"



OVER TO YOU

ACROSTIC POEM

An acrostic poem is one where the first letter of each line spells out a word when read vertically, linked to the theme of the poem. Here's a Chartism-themed acrostic poem written by the Women of Wisdom in Pontypool. They chose the Welsh name PONTYPŴL as their word.

*People of Ponty,
Our hearts marched as one,
Newport was our destination,
Tirelessly and without hesitation,
Yearning for our rights,
Persevering through wind and rain,
Walking warriors with our six aims,
Lanterns guiding us all the way.*

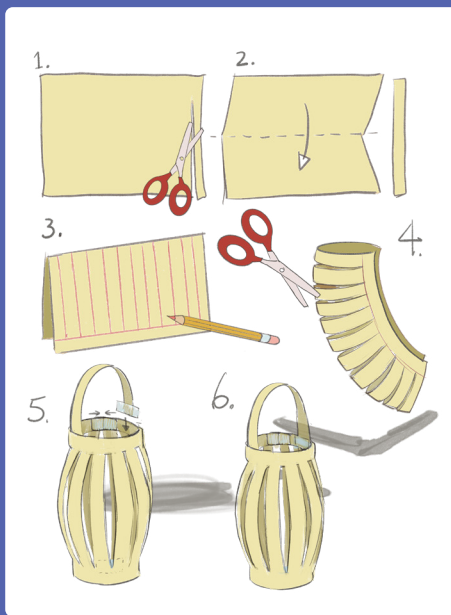
Now that you know more about Chartism in South Wales, try writing an acrostic poem of your own. You can choose any vertical word, but here are some suggestions:

CHARTIST VOTING PROTEST RIGHTS

OVER TO YOU

When you get home, you can write your poem, or the anthem you wrote earlier, on a piece of white or coloured A4 paper. With an adult to supervise, make a lantern out of the paper. Remember, NEVER put a candle or other flame inside a paper lantern. If you have a battery-powered tealight, you could light up your lantern with that, and see your words shining bright!

PAPER LANTERNS



We hope you enjoyed this Story Quest adventure with Hazel, George and Molly.

Before you leave you can:

- Revisit any stops you'd like to spend more time at – can you spot any wildlife on your way?
- Borrow a book from Pontypool Library
- Visit Torfaen Museum and learn more about Pontypool's history (check opening hours at www.torfaenmuseum.org.uk)
- Visit our website for details of other Story Quests in South Wales

And remember...you don't have to be grown-up to make a difference. The next chapter of history starts with YOU.

See you on your next Story Quest adventure!

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