A Year In The Life of the Welsh Underground Network

One of the exciting developments in Welsh politics during 2021 was the creation of the Welsh Underground Network – a group of Marxist activists committed to independence for Wales and with an orientation towards community politics. Below we republish their review of the year written by secretary of the WUN, Joseph Jones who visited Glasgow and met with members of the Radical Independence Campaign and ecosocialist.scot in November during COP26.

> *As we have finally reached 2022, now's the time to reflect on the promises we made to ourselves this time 12 months ago, and what we've achieved in this long, and for many, difficult year.*
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> *At the risk of sounding like a Christmas advert – it's genuinely been a year like no other.*
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> *For the Organization I've been lucky enough to Chair for over two years – the Welsh Underground Network, it's been a year of amazing growth, of challenges, of triumphs, and of forging links – between ourselves, and the communities we operate in.*
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> *I thought I'd write this as a way to sum up the year we've had, to recollect, and to help us plot where we intend to go in 2022.*

1: Becoming the WUN

> *The biggest thing to happen to us in 2021 has undoubtedly been the birth of the WUN itself.*
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> *In April 2021, we were thrilled to announce the launch of Wrexham Underground – our Chapter in North Wales. For the near two years previous, we had been solely Valleys*

Underground, but had dreams of expansion.

With Wrexham's dramatic launch – starting with a beautiful banner display across a busy motorway – we launched a National Organization, and have since had applications from across Wales.

In the last fortnight, we are thrilled to close off the year with the launch of our Swansea Chapter – bringing the total number of active chapters to three.

We've also managed to increase the number of working groups within the WUN itself. With the establishment of a Women's Working Group, a Trans Working Group, and a POC Working Group, we are attempting to ensure the voices of everyone are not only included, but amplified, to ensure a Socialist Welsh Republic for all, not just some.

2: Events, events, events.

Despite the many, many, many limitations of the year, the WUN has been able to organize a variety of events and actions.

Starting off in 2019, our goal was to be active, be seen, and to do good work in the community. We've faced quite a few bumps along the way, but I'm immensely proud of the work our Members have done this year.

A point of pride has been our free food events.

From Wrexham City Center, to the Gurnos Shops in Merthyr, Blackwood, Swansea, Lansbury Park, and the Fernhill Estate, our Members have been active across Wales – providing hot food, hygiene products, and basic supplies to those who need them.



Members of our Wrexham Chapter conducting a free-food event. We've also been active in community clearups, helping work on the derelict Fernhill Allotments, helping renovate the Cefn Fforest Miner's Institute, and continuing our work with the Foundation for Jewish Heritage on the Merthyr Synagogue.



Members of our Valleys Chapter active in the Cefn Fforest Miner's Institute.

Members have also conducted a number of online events this year too. From our regular RedReads bookclub, to live-

streamed panels, to film screenings for charity, we have attempted to find new ways of reaching people due to the strains of Covid.

Members of the WUN have also been present at a variety of demonstrations in Wales this year.

The disgusting, yet unsurprising horror in America regarding Racism has fuelled a cry across the world for basic justice.

In Wales, we have so much to do.

Our Members were in attendance at a variety of BLM protests, and have since made strong links with BLM's active campaigns across Wales.

Members have also participated in action regarding Kill the Bill demonstrations, building links with other activists in our fight against the encroaching erosion of our liberties by an increasingly authoritarian right-wing state.

In a momentous occasion for us, we also held our first WUN Congress in Aberystwyth, where members from across Wales came together to socialise, create a Constitution, sort out internal affairs, and plan for the upcoming year.



Members at our first-ever WUN Congress in Aberystwyth.

3: Building links

As already mentioned, the WUN have increased our attempts to build links with other activists this year, making connections with groups and organizations not just in Wales, not just within the UK, but across the World.

Our Valleys Chapter were thrilled to host the Zapatistas this summer, giving a Radical History tour of Merthyr Tydfil to the delegation of Revolutionaries.

Some of our Members have also built links with Internationalist groups, such as Palestine Action. In late November, members were 'allegedly' involved in an action conducted by PA in Wrexham against a Drone manufacturer.



…alleged Members of the WUN at the Palestine Action Occupation of Solvay Drone Materials Factory.

I myself was lucky enough to boost links on behalf of the WUN with the Radical Independence Campaign in Scotland this Autumn, speaking at their COP26 Summit Event on Revolutionary Nationalism.

4: The Walk



Yours truly, having just finished the WUN Long March (three months after starting…)

Speaking for myself, the year was marked largely by the WUN Long March. From August until November, roughly 70-odd days, I walked and wild-camped the entirety of the UK – Land's End to John O'Groats.

It was a hard slog, I won't lie. I had heatstroke, fell down a cliff, ruined two tents, and travelled through a variety of rough weather.

The result though was almost £2,000 raised for the WUN's community projects. I was pleased along the way to meet up with Socialist activists, and build bridges with Groups and Organizations on behalf of the WUN.

Conclusion

2021 for the WUN was a monumental year, perhaps the best year of our existence. We've had challenges, of course, but what our Members have achieved has been phenomenal.

I would like to thank everyone on behalf of the WUN for your support, your patronage, and your aid in making 2021 a year like no other.

In 2022, let's make this the year of action, of physical aid, and of new horizons.

We wish you all the very best for the coming new year, and hope you find what you're looking for.

Joseph Jones, Chair of the WUN. First published at https://welshundergroundnetwork.com/2021/12/31/2021-the-year-in-review/