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Dear Readers,

We're sharing the love this month, with a special Valentine's edition of the Focus. Whilst our pages are strewn with love hearts, we've taken a slightly different approach to the season of love. Too often Valentine's Day becomes a time when people are divided into those IN a relationship, and those NOT, often with the latter group feeling pretty rubbish about 14th February generally. So instead of all that we've decided to give our attention to our local businesses this Valentine's Day, showing them a bit of love and encouraging you to do the same. It's been a hard couple of years for everyone, but the survival of our High Street and local businesses really depends on you making that choice to use them, or risk losing them. If you need a reminder as to why supporting local is so vitally important, take a look at pages 24-37

Alongside our feature, we have all the usual articles for you to enjoy, so if February is feeling a little bit gloomy, why not kick back with a brew and settle down with this month's magazine?

Happy Reading,

Publisher: Focus Magazines Ltd

Tel: 01873 856614

hello@thefocus.wales

Contributions:

Jane Bradbury, Heather Cook, Dr Giles P Croft, Christopher Hacking, Oliver James, Pauline Mardell, Chloe Masefield, Dan Mazhindu, Helen Morgan, Kasia Ociepa, Marion Pearse, Rebecca Perry, Jonathan Powell, Kate Taylor

Organisations: Citizens Advice, MCC

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Abergavenny Leisure Centre RE-DEVELOPMENT

OPENING
JANUARY
2022



Visit our website in order to take a look at the refurbishments set out by Monmouthshire County Council for Abergavenny Leisure Centre. These refurbishments aim to create a wellness hub for the local community.



Abergavenny's £1.7m refurbished leisure centre now open to members

Following its £1.7m refurbishment, Abergavenny leisure centre has opened its doors to the public, revealing a host of new equipment and modern leisure facilities.

The refurbishment of Abergavenny Leisure Centre, which opened on the 4th January 2022, has created a wellness hub over the first floor to create modern leisure facilities for the local community, helping to increase participation in regular physical activity.

The new facilities include:

- Extended Fitness Suite
- Dedicated Group Exercise Studio
- Spin Studio
- New Fitness Changing Facilities
- Ground Floor Coffee Vending Offer

Members are advised that due to unforeseen circumstances, the swimming pool at Abergavenny Leisure Centre will be closed during the month of January. Investigatory works are being carried out and updates will be available through MonLife's website and social media channels soon.

This development follows the successful completion of the project at Monmouth leisure centre, which was completed in 2019. Elected members of Monmouthshire County Council have stated how committed they are to investing in and developing Leisure facilities across our county to support the health and wellbeing of our citizens. The continued investment into Monmouthshire's leisure facilities will have a significant impact on wellbeing for not only now, but also for future generations.

Councillor Lisa Dymock, Monmouthshire County Council's Cabinet Member for Community Wellbeing and Social Justice, said: "It is extremely fulfilling to see the doors open on this exciting project. We are committed to investing in and developing leisure facilities across our county, which has such a positive effect for not only our current residents, but future generations too. Seeing the incredible facilities shows just how hard MonLife have worked. Thank you to everyone for your continued hard work, being a fantastic way to start 2022."

To celebrate its opening, MonLife Active are offering a membership deal, where members could get a 12-month membership for the price of 9, where more information can be found here: [Be Extraordinary - Monlife](#)

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Gwent Gets Ready for *Nature Isn't Neat 2022*

Gwent has many species of pollinators which are at risk, including the nationally rare Shril Carder Bee, which has one of its strongholds on the Gwent Levels.

Following successful grassland management pilots to improve biodiversity across the Gwent local authorities, this year the Nature Isn't Neat approach to management is being coordinated to cover wider areas across Gwent, with the mission of making it 'pollinator friendly' by allowing more wildflowers to grow in our green spaces.

The project which is to be delivered as part of the Gwent Green Grid Partnership, will engage with local communities across South-East Wales, raising awareness of pollinator decline and encouraging community ownership and empowerment to deliver actions that will help them recover.



Councillor Lisa Dymock

Nature Isn't Neat will establish a joined-up approach to the management of green spaces, also known as Green Infrastructure (GI), to create wildflower-rich pollinator habitats across 5 local authority areas (Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Newport and Torfaen) An operative's Code of Action and training programme will be delivered, supporting effective pollinator management within the region.

The project will also contribute to the development of Pollinator Policies for local authorities and other relevant organisations to secure wide scale land enhancement for pollinators, creating resilient ecological networks.

Activities and events are planned for 2022 to promote wildflower and pollinator management, so look out for further updates on the website (www.monlife.co.uk/outdoor/nature-isnt-neat/) or follow on Twitter @Natureisntneat and @Gwentgreengrid for all the latest news.

Monmouthshire County Council's cabinet member for Climate Emergency, Cllr. Jane Pratt said: "This new year we are delighted to be able to build upon the progress made within each of the local authorities to enhance grassland biodiversity, including Nature Isn't Neat across Monmouthshire. Pollinators are a vital part of ecosystems; most plants need pollen from another flower to complete their lifecycle and produce fruits and seeds.

Bees, butterflies and many more insects perform this free service, pollinating 88% of wild plants and 75% of global crop species. However, pollinators are in trouble. Since the 1980s, half of all pollinator species have become less widespread, and populations of bees and hoverflies have declined by 30%. While progress has been made, thanks to changes such as our selective mowing policy, there's still work to be done and this year offers many fantastic opportunities to make a difference."

Changes to help keep flowering species alive for longer, not only provide food and habitats for the pollinators and other species, but also increases water absorption, provides Carbon sequestration, and improves the health of the soil. Research suggests that creating environments which support a wider range of wildlife, benefits people's health and mental wellbeing, while encouraging them to slow down and enjoy watching flowers, insects and other wildlife.

Councillor Lisa Dymock, Monmouthshire's cabinet member with responsibility for Green Infrastructure said: "We are excited about the coordination of the Nature isn't Neat approach through the Gwent Green Grid Partnership, as this strategy is crucial in response to the decline in biodiversity and challenges of climate change. Using the Nature isn't Neat approach, the project aims to improve prospects for wildlife, providing crucial stepping stones for species to move between good habitat areas at a regional level."

This project is part of a series of programmes to be delivered under the Gwent Green Grid Partnership Project, which is supported by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe Investing in Rural Areas and is funded by the Welsh Government's Enabling of Natural Resources and Well-being Grant.

Find out more about the Gwent Green Grid at: www.monlife.co.uk/outdoor/green-infrastructure/green-infrastructure-partnerships-projects/gwent-green-grid-partnership/

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Not 'in love' with your home?
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We spend a lot of time with our home, no more so than we have in the last few years, but let's not talk about the 'C-word'. Our relationship with our homes can be a rollercoaster ride.

Our Abergavenny Branch Manager, Jo Francis offers 3 reasons why you might have fallen out of love with your property and what you can do about it.

Putting Off The Small Stuff Because You Have A Bigger Project Planned

If you have a big project planned and if it's on it's way you're a step closer to falling in love again. However, if your project is more of a some-day plan then try to tackle smaller things as they crop up.

If little things are broken or need touching up this can have a negative effect on your day to day life. Write a list and set a priority and try to tackle them bit by bit. Approaching it this way helps make the tasks less daunting.



Too Impatient To Go For Planning Permission

Weighing up the pro's and con's of going from planning permission can cause a lot of anxiety. This can cause homeowners to opt for a layout that doesn't require planning. Now 10 years on there may be a need for more space and to gain it means undoing much of the original work.

Don't be put off by planning. Yes you are opening yourself up to the opinions of neighbours and there is a risk involved but compromising to avoid it isn't wise.

Too Much Stuff

You may have seen on BBC a show titled 'Sort your life out' starring Stacey Soloman and a crack team of professional de-clutters. If you haven't it's worth a watch. During our life we can accumulate thousands of objects without even realising it, this can leave us feeling overwhelmed and lead to resentment towards our homes.

Embrace the Marie Kondo/ Stacey Soloman way and get rid of things you no longer need, want or like. Then look at ways to create designated storage.

But as we all know not all relationships can be saved. The time with your home may have reached its natural end. It may be that you have outgrown it and your current house isn't suitable. Or that your house has served you well for years but you don't require the space anymore. Whatever the reason, if you know the time is right to move, we are here for you and can help you find your next match.



Jo Francis
Abergavenny Branch Manager

If you are in the middle of saving for your next move there is not excuse not to celebrate Valentines day with these stay-at-home ideas

Challenge each other to a board game

Chances are that you have a few old games lying around your home, failing that the local charity shop will have a few to pick from. Lift the lid, turn the telly off and see who's the best at checkers!

Write a 2022 To-Do list

The past few years have bottled us up at home, missing pre-pandemic life. What did you miss and want to do? Make a list together and get 2022 mapped out. Wanted to try paddle boarding? 2022 is your year to get on the water!

Challenge each other to a bake off

Turn your kitchen into the set of 'The Great British Bake Off' and try and wow each other with delicious fresh-baked goods. Even if they're not 'photo perfect', they'll still taste great.

Don't forget the handshake for the best bake!

Let's get moving...

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Abergavenny: Things to do & Places to be

We are delighted to announce that the **Urban NATURE GARDEN** project is within reach following an award from the **Postcode Communities Trust**, a grant-giving charity funded entirely by **Players of People's Postcode Lottery**.

It's a good feeling to be among the family of grant holders and we look forward to working with partners to revitalise, and bring life to an urban environment. (See photo) If you are an interested landscape gardener, contractor, artist or craftsman please make yourself known to us as the tendering process will get underway soon.

February is a good month to think ahead, so with Spring around the corner and news of a funding success we are feeling a sense of optimism creeping back. To celebrate, we are holding an **OPEN DAY** at the Community Centre

on Sunday 27th February from 11-4pm where it will be possible to find out more about the nature garden and see what else is happening at the community centre in its seventh year. The activities are family friendly and, weather permitting, we will lay on warm soup and pizza on the day.

Abergavenny is surrounded by inspiring people, places and initiatives and we are drawing on them to join the event by raising awareness of things that they are doing to shape and care for Abergavenny, and keep people connected. If your enterprise is new please get in touch about how you can be included.

What is a hedgehog highway? What seeds do I plant now? Can I help a grower? What is a repair cafe? How do we make a bug hotel? What is the peace garden? Where is the Laurie Jones community orchard? What is a

'library of things'? Who can I ask for advice? Did I hear mention of cooking clubs? What do "Friends of " groups do? How can I help? ... these are just some of the questions that will be answered as we explore more about how we make, do, and mend in Abergavenny.

We are appealing to all residents, former pupils and staff at Park Street Infants School to seek your support in meeting our public fundraising target of £2K towards 'operation nature garden'. You can make an online donation by visiting the fundraising platform, Localgiving, where you can watch the amount grow, or even become a fundraiser, if you like a challenge? Please visit <https://localgiving.org/NatureGarden>. Thank you for reading this article.

Marion Pearce

Covid note: For your safety the Open Day activities will be spread across the building and grounds. Please watch out for updates.

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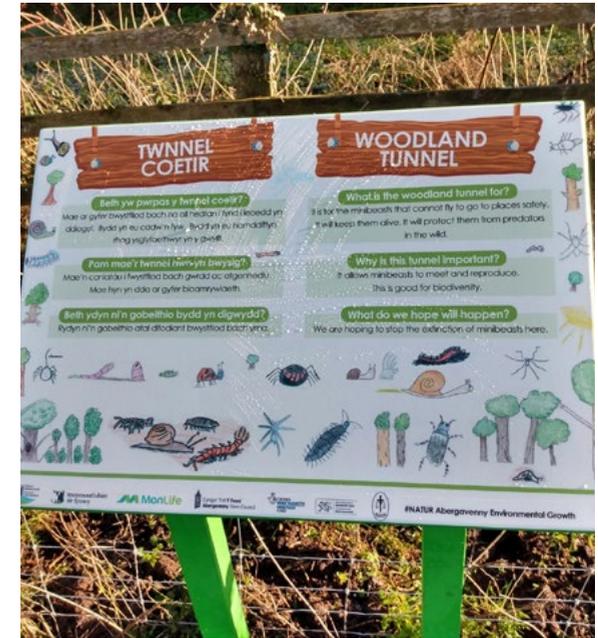
New 'Woodland Tunnel' in Castle Meadows

It was a beautiful sun-drenched morning at Castle Meadows for the recent unveiling of the Woodland Tunnel and the Interpretation panel designed by the children from Our Lady and St Michael's Primary School in Abergavenny.

The tunnel will be planted with 100 native saplings to establish a woodland tunnel linking copses in Castle Meadows for woodland creatures to thrive!

Abergavenny Town Council offered their huge thanks to the Friends of Castle Meadows for their tremendous effort in all the ground work preparation, and to Monmouthshire County Council / MonLife who continue to support the work of the Friends group.

This is the latest part of a larger project made possible with funding from the Local Places For Nature National Heritage Lottery Funding.



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News from Longtown Mountain Rescue Team



Conditions were icy near Black Hill

Sugarloaf, we were contacted by South & Mid Wales Cave Rescue Team, asking for assistance with a call out they were dealing with in the Cwm Clydach Gorge - a caver had injured their hip in the entrance to the cave that they were visiting. The cave entrance is accessed via a steep path with a severe drop off, so using a simple but effective rope system we were able to protect all those involved and get the injured gentleman via stretcher up to the road to meet the waiting ambulance.



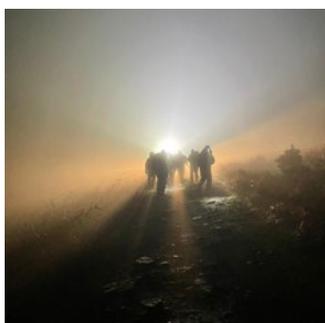
Since last month's article on the rescue of Huw Morgan, the team have been busy with a number of callouts either side of the New Year.

Just a couple days after the Skirrid Fach search for Huw, we were back out again involved in a search in Hereford for a missing person. This involved land and water teams being deployed over multiple days. On one of these days we had another Skirrid shout; this time on Skirrid Fawr. A young man had experienced a serious medical episode while ascending the 'Holy Mountain'. We deployed a number of people but due to also being active in Hereford on that day we called in support from our neighbouring colleagues in Brecon MRT. They were quickly with us, providing additional medics and kit to allow us to safely evacuate the young man off the hill via stretcher and a rope system.



Brecon MRT team assisted with bringing the casualty down from the Skirrid

Our last call out of 2021 was on the evening of the 27th. We were contacted by the police requesting assistance with an incident on the Sugarloaf. During an organised group walk, a lady had slipped on the approach to the summit, resulting in head, chest and wrist injuries. The group had been well prepared for the weather conditions and had administered initial first aid and provided shelter, however with the low cloud and rain, everyone was fast getting cold.



Low cloud and rain on the Sugarloaf

The team were quickly mobilised and on scene, with team medics giving treatment and pain relief to the lady. Once she had been made comfortable and had warmed up, the casualty was evacuated via stretcher and a rope system down to the main car park. She was then handed over to our colleagues in the Ambulance Services for onward travel to hospital.

Our first call out of 2022 was quite a big one. Just before 2pm

on the 5th January the team were activated to assist with an injured walker in the Black Mountains, near Black Hill. A well prepared and experienced gentleman had slipped and felt his knee 'pop', making onward travel very difficult and painful. We had a good idea of the casualty's location on the hill so we sent two parties up the Olchon Valley gully path and a third up Black Hill via the Cats Back Ridge. Once with the casualty, medical aid was provided with priority given to keeping the gentleman and the rest of the team warm as snow was falling heavily and the wind was picking up. It was decided that a stretcher carry off was the best way to evacuate the mountain, and back down the Olchon Valley path was deemed the safest option as the Cats Back Ridge was becoming very icy by this stage. Once down onto the road, the casualty was transferred

to an ambulance to be checked over at hospital.

The following Sunday the team had a busy day with back to back callouts. First, we were asked to assist with an incident on the Sugarloaf. A regular and experienced mountain walker had slipped on the descent from the summit, resulting in a lower leg injury. By chance, a member of the team was on the hill enjoying an early run so was able to get to the casualty quickly and start providing shelter. This was crucial as the weather that day was exceptionally windy and cold, and hypothermia can develop into a very serious risk in these circumstances. We rapidly had more team members on the hill, providing warmth, treatment and pain relief to the casualty before we stretchered the injured lady off the hill. Once back at the main car park of the

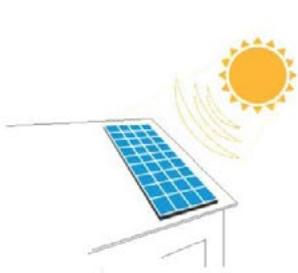
We wish all of the casualties a full and speedy recovery.

And finally, in amongst all of this action, one of our team members, Andrew Geeson, also took part in and completed the Montane Mountain Rescue Spine race! A gruelling 173km/108Miles in under 60 hours! A truly phenomenal experience but even more so when you hear that mid race he helped find a lost runner...clearly never off duty.

Dan Mazhindu



Andrew Geeson with a well earned cup of tea!



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After a fairly lenient January, the focus shifts as in previous years to February to provide any seasonal blast of wintry weather. However, whereas some snow, ice, and generally cold conditions are naturally to be expected, their impact on the month does not look to be a significant or sustained one. We can expect a mix of rain/sleet/and snow at lower levels, with probably anything of any more serious wintry substance confined to higher ground. With mild temperatures seemingly operating for much of February, any rain will stay mostly as rain, and the risk of overnight frost activity duly kept largely to a minimum. A fair amount of dry days likely throughout the month with some late winter sunshine to accompany them, but all in all, the month looks unlikely to provide any major snow event. Rainfall is expected to be on or near the monthly average. A milder than average month is also expected

Forecast from Jonathan Powell



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Outside seating in summer with views of the Skirrid (Holy) mountain.



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GIVE A LITTLE LOCAL LOVE

February is the month of love

and we're encouraging you to spread your love a little bit further this month, by giving a little local love. Local businesses are the backbone of our economy. Did you know that spending just £10 with a local independent business means that an additional £50 goes back into the local economy? But more than this, by supporting local businesses you are encouraging the creation of local jobs, enjoying a better shopping experience because you get that personal touch and you're likely to enjoy a better quality of service too. Here's a taste of some of the wonderful businesses local to you. If you're in need of any of their services, we urge you to get in touch with them!

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Crickhowell Adventure started way back in 1977 when Jeff Thomas and John Inns rented the basement of what was then 'The Cheese Press', (now Bookish) in the High Street, Crickhowell.

They did not have much stock in the early days and so as the shop was long and narrow with a large chimney breast in the middle, they would move stock across the shop while customers were at the far end to make it look as if there was more! Being keen outdoor enthusiasts with experience throughout the mountains of Europe, they took redundancy from British Steel and having seen there was no outdoor equipment outlet available locally decided to do it themselves.

After a couple of years, the business moved across the road to Number 1 High Street, which is where we

still are today, although with a bit more stock than before. So that was our start, all those years ago. Obviously things have changed, John, sadly is no longer with us and Jeff has retired, so it's up to Jane and gang to keep things going. They're not doing a bad job as the shop has won an award in The Great Outdoor magazine for the best Independent Outdoor retailer category, of which they are very proud!

All the staff enjoy the outdoors whether walking, long distance and local, and cycling. They are only too happy to test new clothing and equipment as part of their jobs. This means they can advise about products from personal experience, giving customers first-hand advice and super personal service. They enjoy chatting to customers about where they have been and swapping ideas for future ventures...whether yours or theirs!



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At Taylor & Co we recognise the importance of helping those less fortunate than ourselves and we are proud to be supporters of Tŷ Hafan, our chosen charity.

Tŷ Hafan is a leading Welsh children's charity which provides comfort, care and support to children with life-limiting conditions, along with their families both at the hospice and within the community too. Through their vibrant hospice and diverse community programmes, they offer families short-break care and help them make the most of the time they have left together; creating precious memories and ensuring a short life is a full life. And when a child is close to the end of their life, Tŷ Hafan becomes a family's safe haven, by their side during their most difficult time and for as long as they are needed.

Every year Tŷ Hafan take care of over 200 children with life-limiting conditions whilst supporting their families. This is a collective



effort as Tŷ Hafan simply couldn't provide its vital services without the kindness and generosity of the community. To run the hospice and deliver their broad community programmes, they need to raise around £4.5 million each year.

Every donation of time or money helps them continue to provide comfort, care and support to children and their families across Wales. Over the years, our small but committed team have taken part in several activities to raise much needed funds for Tŷ Hafan and our Just Giving page chronicles all the fun that we have in doing so.

However, our ability to take part in sponsored events has become increasingly difficult over the last 22 months as the Covid pandemic has affected our ability to take part in group sports activities, lending a hand packing bags in supermarkets has understandably ended and attending hospitality events with our collection buckets has tailed off too.

We have therefore pledged to donate £100 to Tŷ Hafan on the successful completion of every property sale that we are instructed on from 1st January to the end of December 2022.

To find out more about Tŷ Hafan, please visit www.tyhafan.org. For more information on our adventures and to track our progress, or make a donation in support of Tŷ Hafan, visit our Just Giving Page www.justgiving.com/fundraising/taylor-co

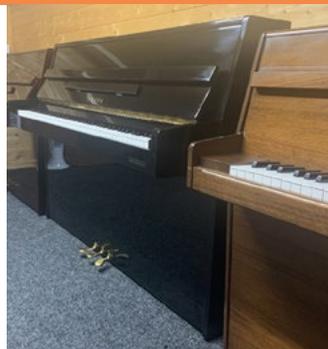
On behalf of the team, thank you for your support, it is very much appreciated!

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David James started the business in the idyllic market town of Brecon and his son Oliver wanted to expand the business to include an office in the bustling town of Abergavenny, that serves the stunning surrounding area, in which he resides.

Oliver roped his cousin Hywel into the business, having already had many years' experience of the Abergavenny market and being born and raised in the area. Together this family-run firm have a wealth of experience in selling property in the Brecon Beacons.



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Passionate About Property - Love Where You Live

February is one of those in-between months, falling between the January blues and the brighter horizons promised by March and the first shoots of Spring. It's a month that is often cold, wet and gloomy but is brightened by that punctuation mark in the middle of it when we are flooded with images of love and affection courtesy of St Valentine. Who could have imagined that a third century clergyman from the Roman Empire would have inspired a day when love is celebrated across the Western world? As well as having taught people how to recognize and experience true love, St Valentine also happens to be the patron Saint of epilepsy and beekeepers. In this month's article, however, our focus is firmly on love.



Of course, we can't mention St Valentine without acknowledging our very own Welsh equivalent. A few weeks before Valentine's Day, on 25th January the Welsh celebrate St Dwynwen - the patron saint of lovers. The daughter of King Brychan, (who had 24 daughters!) her tragic story of love gained and lost led her to dedicate her life to lovers everywhere. Celebrating St Dwynwen's Day has grown in popularity in recent years, giving us the chance to choose between the two...or go all out and celebrate both!

For the romantics among us, celebrating St Valentine or St Dwynwen's Day is a time of excitement and an opportunity to express our feelings, to declare our love for those close to us and, perhaps even pluck up the courage to

make that proposal! For the cynics, it is little more than a commercialised day designed to extract money from people through expensive flowers and gifts, or just a naff day peppered with greetings cards full of corny phrases.

Whichever camp you fall into, it's certainly difficult to ignore, so why not embrace it as a positive occasion - telling those close to you that you love them doesn't need to cost a thing! Each year we like to adorn our showroom windows with images and phrases associated with love in the hope that we're bringing a little colour and fun to the street as well as making people smile as they pass by or come in to see us...and what could be better than making others feel a bit brighter?



I definitely enjoy jazzing up our windows, and this time of year when love is all around causes me to reflect on the love I have for the business that I am in. Marketing and selling houses for me is so much more than just being a job - it is my absolute passion and one of my greatest loves. I never set out to become an estate agent - it wasn't something I dreamed of becoming as a little girl. No, I 'fell' into the profession in the late 1980's and once property had got under my skin, it was impossible to walk away from.

I often say that marketing somebody's home is a privilege, and it is so true. I am always very aware that when I am marketing someone's home that it is more than likely to be their most precious asset. More than just bricks and mortar, though, the building is undoubtedly full of important memories for the owners and I am never complacent about that. It can be an emotional journey for many owners when they are selling, whether it is a beloved home or one where they have decided it's time to move on from more difficult times.

When people decide to sell, it's not uncommon for us to hear comments from our clients such

as 'We love our neighbours' or 'We hope the new owners will love the house as much as we do,' proof that our love for our homes is very much a real thing. Buying a property is often driven by emotion as well - how often do you hear the word 'love' attached to the reactions that a property might inspire.... 'We fell in love with the kitchen,' or 'We loved the views,' or even.... 'I knew I loved it the moment we walked in,' which always reminds me of that line in Jerry Maguire when Renee Zellweger tells him, "You had me at Hello."



I have worked in property for many years, but I am not immune to the effects of walking into a house for the first time with a view to marketing it for sale. I will often get bowled over by one of its features: a gorgeous fireplace, a sweeping view or a beautiful bathroom. It's always such an exciting prospect to think about sharing that with a potential buyer. Property is intoxicating and, for me, has been and continues to be a long and happy relationship.

Fortunately I am lucky to be surrounded by a team of people who are as passionate about property as I am. Parrys Fine & Country write a regular



blog called 'Love where you live' showcasing the spectacular towns and villages in and around Monmouthshire, Powys and Herefordshire. We really enjoy reading comments on our social media pages from people sharing their happy times and memories of a special place. If you are looking to buy, sell, let or rent a property, do get in touch with us so that we can share our love of property with you too.

Heather Cook



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FIND YOUR FAVOURITE PLACE AND TELL SOMEONE ABOUT IT

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LOOK UP AND ADMIRE THE VIEW

Be a tourist in your own town

TRY A BOOK BY A LOCAL AUTHOR

Ask your local butcher how to cook your roast

CHECK OUT THE MARKET-ENJOY THE ATMOSPHERE

STOP.CHAT.SMILE.REPEAT

DISCOVER AN ARTIST OR MAKER FROM YOUR OWN TOWN

POP TO THE DELI FOR SOME 'NICE BITS'

HAVE A MEAL AT A LOCAL PUB OR FAMILY RUN RESTAURANT

GET RECOMMENDATIONS FROM REAL PEOPLE

NOT ONLINE ALGORITHMS

DISCUSS THE WEATHER

Find out who can do it in the place that you live

IF YOU ARE IN A QUEUE...

STRIKE UP A CONVERSATION WITH A STRANGER

BE KIND

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Natural Weigh is taking part in the 'Just one bottle' campaign

To encourage more people to try Refill shops across the UK

With the planet in the throes of a climate emergency, the Refill retail sector is growing. Refill shops offer a great way to shop more sustainability, save money and have a positive impact on the planet. Some people, however are reluctant to take the first steps into the refill way for reasons such as fears of making a mess and the cost.

With the potential to save over a hundred bottles of mostly un-recyclable plastic per family annually, refill shops offer a viable alternative.

The 'Just one bottle' campaign is being launched on January 1st 2022 to encourage people to just try refilling one bottle. We hope to encourage people who want to do their bit to help reduce plastic waste to just start small. Just refill one bottle. If each household



did this, imagine the impact it would make! Whether it is refilling an empty bottle of washing up liquid or shampoo bottle we are encouraging people to just give it a go.

The network of refill shops across the UK work together, unlike the majority of the retail sector. We all have the same goal, to help the fight against climate change and to support our communities in their sustainable goals. We will all be posting about the campaign across our social media networks and will all be asking our local press to run a story to help highlight the campaign, spreading the word as far as possible.

Many members of the public feel powerless against the effects of climate change and that they are not able to contribute in the fight against it. The rates of climate anxiety are rising fast. This campaign is about empowering individuals and showing people that together, with one small change, we can ALL contribute to the fight against climate change.

JUST ONE BOTTLE!



If you want to start doing your bit to help reduce plastic waste then start small.

JUST REFILL ONE BOTTLE

If each household did this, imagine the impact it would make!

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Twyn y Gaer Hill Fort Walk

A stroll through lanes and fields, a climb up hills with views, and a ramble through pretty woodland. It takes in a nature reserve and an ancient hill fort. It's just over 5 miles long and, while none of it is particularly arduous, you should dress for mud and undergrowth.

To get there:

Take the A465 (to Hereford) out of Abergavenny. Turn off at Llanvihangel Crucorney and take the first left after the Skirrid Inn. Continue past Stanton. Just after the Queens Head Inn, there is a small car park on the left. There may be a charge for parking here, so bring some coins with you.

Directions Overleaf...



1 Leave the car park and walk towards the Inn, turning left just before you reach it. Cross the bridge over the Afon Honddu, then go over the stile on the right.



2 Following the river at first, walk to a small wooden footbridge and stile, across the next field to a copse of trees with the river passing through it. Follow the line of the river until you reach a wooden footbridge that crosses it.

3 Cross the bridge, and cross the road beyond it. Continue in a south westerly direction along a lane. Pass through Stanton Manor Farm and continue along the track.

4 Pass through a metal gate and then go right when the track forks.



Continue uphill along the track

5 Pass through a metal gate onto the open access land of Bryn Arw.



Follow the path for about half a mile. Pass through a gate and stile and continue down the track.

6 After 260m Look out for a track on the right that doubles back down the hill. If you get to a farm, you've missed it!

7 The track will take you past the Coed-y-Cerrig nature reserve, which has a raised wooden boardwalk going through it – maybe worth a look if you've plenty of time.



Continue along the track to the road. Turn left onto it, and walk a short way. Go over the stile on the right and follow the path (difficult to do in places) as it travels uphill through the woods.

8 Go over the stile and out of the wood at the top of the path. The footpath now passes along the left hand boundary of The Pant (a private property) past a pond which is shaped like a whale if you look carefully (or on Google Maps). Go over a stile and past the houses. Don't exit via the driveway however; cross it and go over the stile on the other side.



9 Follow the footpath to a junction of farm tracks. Immediately ahead of you is a stile in the hedge, but it's easy to miss it.



Cross this, and continue through New Inn Farm, passing the farm buildings on your left.

10 Join the metalled road and turn right up the hill. When the track forks, take the right hand route which travels

uphill, and through a small wood. Go past an old caravan (if it's still there) and along the track towards Gaer Farm.

11 The OS map shows the footpath going straight through the farmhouse buildings, however it has been re-routed; immediately after the gate to Gaer Farm, the footpath goes hard left, up through trees and undergrowth – the path is not really discernable but there is a marker, so keep your eyes peeled. Go left through a metal gate and follow the track round to the left.



12 When you reach a group of trees and a stone wall on the left, you should be level with the hill fort, so turn right and scramble up the hill to the top and to the trig point, (or if you don't feel like scrambling, follow the path until it meets another that doubles back to the top – 12b). The earthworks of the hill fort are clearly visible and the view from here is great. It's easy to see why you'd want your fort here!



13 When you've finished admiring the view, leave via the track that leads east. The track meets a boundary wall and bears round to the left. Follow this path until you get to the road/track. Turn right on to it and enjoy an easy stroll for a mile, all the way down the hill and back to the car park.



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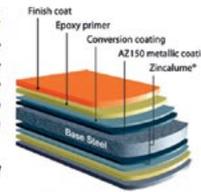
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Tips for Saving Energy



The rising cost of energy is causing many people to worry. Although there aren't many good deals at the moment, there are some ways that you can keep your bills down by making your home more energy efficient and through financial help from your energy supplier or the government.

Save money by using less energy

There are simple things we can all do such as not leaving televisions and other electronic devices on standby; turning lights off when not using them; washing clothes at a lower temperature; turning down the thermostat; and draught proofing around doors, windows and gaps in floors.

You may be able to claim a one off payment of £100 from the government's winter fuel support scheme to help with fuel costs if you receive certain working age benefits. Details at <https://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/utilities/>.

Further information and advice on energy

Contact our energy adviser Carly Bond on our Citizens Advice office numbers:

Abergavenny 01873 856466,
Caldicot/Chepstow 01291 422119
or Monmouth 01600 773297

Citizens Advice Consumer helpline
0808 223 1133

(0808 223 1144 for Welsh speaking adviser)

Advicelink Gwent freephone 0808 278 7935 www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy

Simple Energy Advice <https://www.simpleenergyadvice.org.uk/> or 0800 444 202

NEST Wales <https://nest.gov.wales/> or 0808 808 2244

Discounts and benefits to help you pay your energy bills

There is some financial support available towards your energy bills depending on your situation. Contact your energy supplier and ask them if they offer any specific grants to help with your energy bills. If you're on a low income, if you get the guarantee element of pension credit or receive Universal Credit or another means tested benefit, you may be entitled to Warm Home Discount. This gives you £140 a year to go towards your bills. Phone your supplier to see if they offer the Warm Home Discount or check on the Gov.uk website. The Winter Fuel Payment is an annual one-off payment to help you pay for heating during the winter. You can usually get a Winter Fuel Payment if you are 65 years old or over. If you are eligible, you should get this automatically.

You may be able to get financial help to help insulate your home. If you're renting ask your landlord to do this. If anyone in your household is receiving benefits, then you should ask your energy supplier if they can help. They should be able to tell you what help is available through the Energy Company Obligation (ECO). This scheme obliges energy companies to support households to install energy efficiency measures such as insulation. If you live in Wales, the Welsh Government's Warm Homes Nest scheme may be able to help you to make your home warmer and more energy efficient.



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Nana's Kitchen



Anzac Bites

I was sorting through my mother's old recipes and came across this one which transported me back to my childhood. You don't need a food mixer, just a bowl, wooden spoon and a bit of elbow power. They are very simple, both in the way they are made and their taste, but that's how it was when I was growing up. They're lovely with a cup of tea or coffee and, when they're past their best, can be dunked!

Ingredients

for approx 16 Bites:

- 114g butter
- 3 level tbsp honey
- 1 egg beaten
- 114g currants
- 226g self raising flour
- 12 tbsp milk

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180C, 160 Fan, Gas 4
2. Grease two 12-hole cake tins and pre-heat for a few minutes in the oven (this creates an even golden bake)
3. Cream the butter, add the honey and mix well
4. Add the beaten egg gradually and beat well
5. Stir in the currants
6. Add a little flour, mix and then add a little milk and combine, continue until all the flour and milk has been used and the mixture is creamed together
7. Fill each bun hole with the mixture and bake in the oven for approximately 15 mins until firm and golden brown
8. Leave to cool on a cooling rack and sprinkle with caster sugar
9. Any left over portions can easily be reheated in the microwave

Pauline Mardell

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Stress Level Zero



I'm grabbing a tiny window of opportunity to write this, because when I look into next week, my calendar (which includes the deadline) is fit to bursting and the 'to do' list of things I have to slot in around appointments is frankly getting out of hand. On top of this, every time I make the trip from office to kitchen for a cup of tea, I'm reminded of all the housework I haven't done and yes, there's the child, shouting to me for something, again!

It's enough to send your stress levels through the roof.

So here's this month's question for you: Do you think *your* life would be easier if I waved my magic wand and gifted you with the ability to deal with *more* stress, or *less*? In other words, which looks like it would help more – a *higher* tolerance to stress, or a *lower* one?

The thinking behind most people's answer to this question goes something like this: Well, there's so much going on, I'm barely able to keep my head above water. Any minute now it seems like the stress is going to overwhelm me, so I'd choose a *higher* tolerance to it please, Giles. If I can just handle a bit

more stress, I'll be better equipped to cope.

This seems logical and sensible, but it's completely topsy-turvy. Author Richard Carlson, in the most well-thumbed book on my shelves, *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff*, puts it beautifully when he says: "Our current level of stress will be exactly that of our tolerance to stress," and *that's* because we've got the perceived *source* of our stress all wrong.

When I look at my calendar and 'to do' list; the laundry and the washing up, it really looks like *they're* what's causing me stress. But I don't get to experience those things directly. All I get to experience — *ever!* — is the thinking I have *about* them, right here, in this present moment.

Life becomes easier the second we *lower* our tolerance to the feeling of stress; promptly pay heed to the useful feedback it's giving us, disengage from our stressful thinking and relax into what *is*, now.

I was working with a client once, who related an insight he'd had about the workplace, between sessions. He said, "I suddenly realised that when I retire, the list

of stuff there is to do, *still* won't be complete. I thought I could only feel good when it was all done, but it never will be!" then burst out laughing at the huge sense of relief this had brought him.

He'd *seen* the impossibility of stress somehow magically being transmitted from a bit of paper or a computer screen; a project plan, the demands of other people or the sound coming out of a phone. It had landed for him that stress is a creation of the mind, and as a consequence, his work never looked the same again.

Sitting here, writing this for you, my calendar's *still* bursting at the seams. The 'to do' list *doesn't* have any fewer items on it. Fairies *haven't* come and done the housework, but I'm here, now, experiencing stress level zero.



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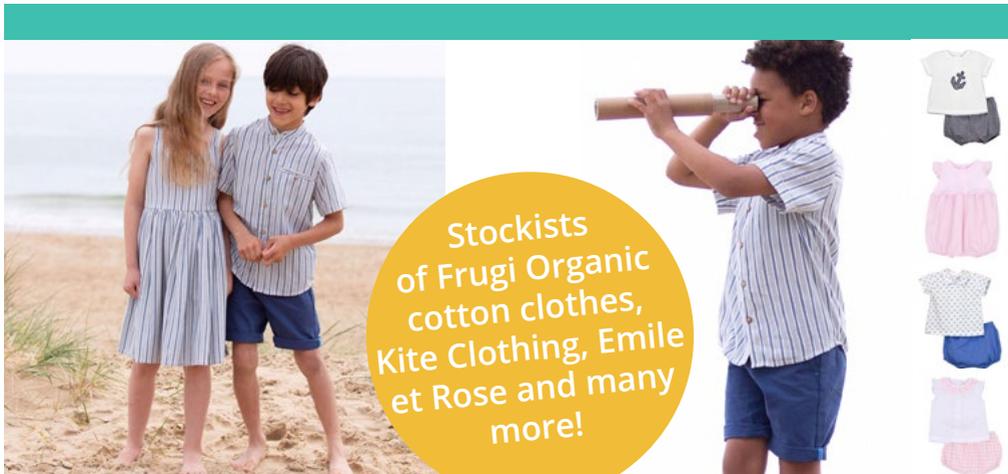
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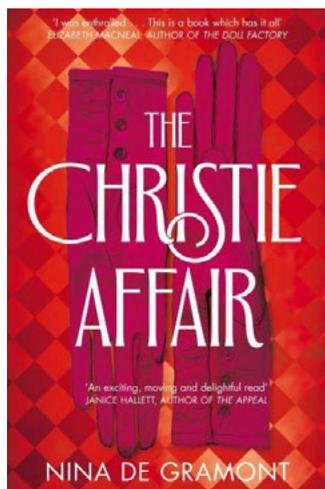
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Books to Love

The team at Book-ish recommend their top picks for February. With Valentine's Day just around the corner, why not gift your loved one a novel...or simply practice some self-love and buy one just for yourself!



The Christie Affair
Nina de Gramont
£16.99

In 1926, Agatha Christie disappeared for 11 days. Only I know the truth of her disappearance. I'm no Hercule Poirot. I'm her husband's mistress.

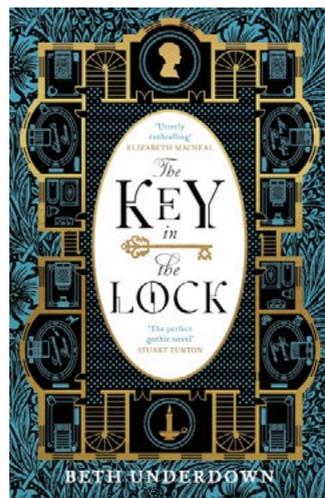
Agatha Christie's world is one of glamorous society parties, country house weekends, and growing literary fame. Nan O'Dea's world is something very different. Her attempts to escape a tough London upbringing during the Great War led to a life in Ireland marred by a hidden tragedy.

After fighting her way back to England, she's set her sights on

Agatha. Because Agatha Christie has something Nan wants. And it's not just her husband.

Despite their differences, the two women will become the most unlikely of allies. And during the mysterious eleven days that Agatha goes missing, they will unravel a dark secret that only Nan holds the key to...

The Key in the Lock
Beth Underdown
£14.99

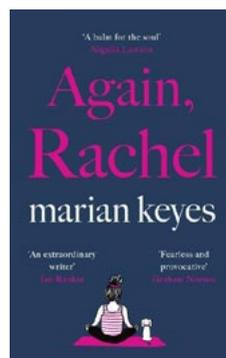


By day, Ivy Boscawen mourns the loss of her son Tim in the Great War. But by night she mourns another boy - one whose death decades ago haunts her still.

For Ivy is sure that there is more to what happened all those years ago: the fire at the Great House, and the terrible events that came after. A truth she must uncover, if she is ever to be free.

From the award-winning author of *The Witchfinder's Sister* comes a captivating story of burning secrets and buried shame, and of the loyalty and love that rises from the ashes.

Again, Rachel
Marian Keyes
£20



Back in the long ago nineties, Rachel Walsh was a mess. But a spell in rehab

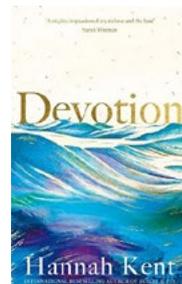
transformed everything. Life became very good, very quickly. These days, Rachel has love, family, a great job as an addiction counsellor, she even gardens. Her only bad habit is a fondness for expensive trainers.

But with the sudden reappearance of a man she'd once loved, her life wobbles.

She'd thought she was settled. Fixed forever. Is she about to discover that no matter what our age, everything can change?

Is it time to think again, Rachel?

Devotion
Hannah Kent
£14.99



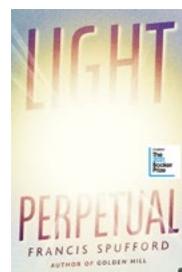
1836, Prussia. Hanne is nearly fifteen and the domestic world of womanhood is quickly closing in on her. A child of nature,

she yearns instead for the rush of the river, the wind dancing around her. Hanne finds little comfort in the local girls and friendship doesn't come easily, until she meets Thea and she finds in her a kindred spirit and finally, acceptance.

Hanne's family are Old Lutherans, and in her small village hushed worship is done secretly - this is a community under threat. But when they are granted safe passage to Australia, the community rejoices: at last a place they can pray without fear, a permanent home. Freedom.

It's a promise of freedom that will have devastating consequences for Hanne and Thea, but, on that long and brutal journey, their bond proves too strong for even nature to break...

Light Perpetual
Francis Spufford
£8.99



November 1944. A German rocket strikes London and five young children are atomised in an instant.

Here are the futures they might have known, had they

experienced the unimaginable changes of the twentieth century - futures that illuminate the miraculous in the everyday, and the preciousness of life itself.

Open Water
Caleb Azumah Nelson
£8.99



Two young people meet at a pub in South East London. Both are Black British, both won

scholarships to private schools where they struggled to belong, both are now artists - he a photographer, she a dancer - trying to make their mark in a city that by turns celebrates and rejects them. Tentatively, tenderly, they fall in love. But two people who seem destined to be together can still be torn apart by fear and violence.

At once an aching beautiful love story and a potent insight into race and masculinity, *Open Water* asks what it means to be a person in a world that sees you only as a Black body, to be vulnerable when you are only respected for strength, to find safety in love, only to lose it. With gorgeous, soulful intensity, Caleb Azumah Nelson has written the most essential British debut of recent years.

The Four Winds
Kristin Hannah
£8.99

Texas, 1934. Elsa Martinelli had finally found the life she'd yearned for. A family, a home and a livelihood on a farm on

the Great Plains. But when drought threatens all she and her community hold dear, Elsa's world is shattered to the winds.

Fearful of the future, when Elsa wakes to find her husband has fled, she is forced to make the most agonizing decision of her life. Fight for the land she loves or take her beloved children, Loreda and Ant, west to California in search of a better life. Will it be the land of milk and honey? Or will their experience challenge every ounce of strength they possess?

From the overriding love of a mother for her child, the value of female friendship and the ability to love again - against all odds - Elsa's incredible journey is a story of survival, hope and what we do for the ones we love.



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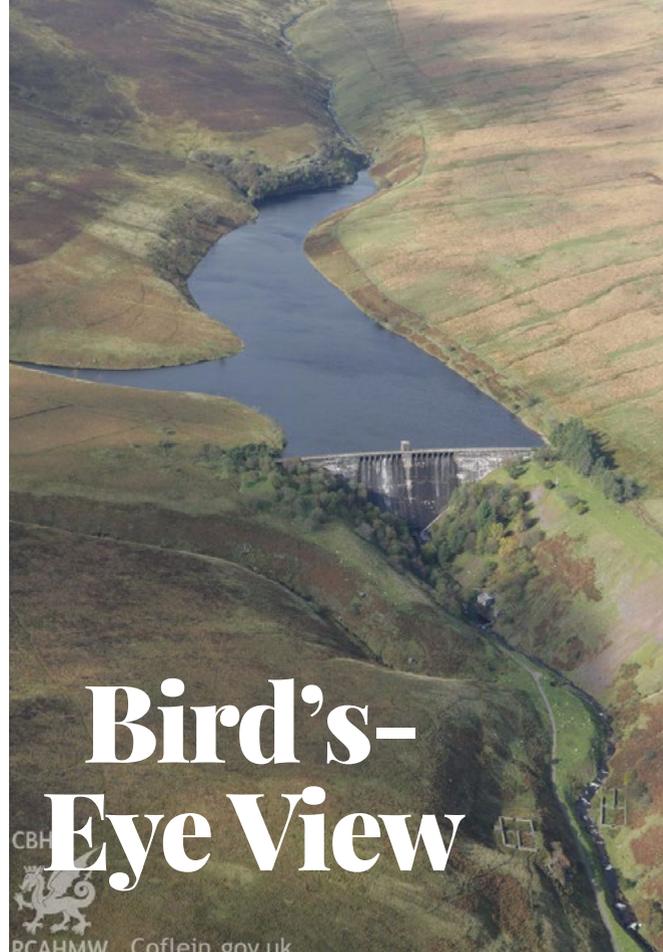
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Bird's-Eye View

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RCAHMMW Coflein.gov.uk

Aerial reconnaissance began in the 18th century when balloons were used to observe military manoeuvres. Helen Morgan from Abergavenny Local History Society reports.

The first photographs were taken in the 1850s using myriad methods of getting a camera aloft.

Aerial photography then came of age during the First World War following the invention of powered flight. Before that, the French military had been early pioneers in its development. During an encounter with the enemy, a small number of troops were said to have been dispatched to a nearby hill and to report

back on troop movements, or on whether artillery fire was falling short or long. Aeroplanes were subsequently used on the Western Front to identify troop locations and to direct artillery fire. As cameras became more sophisticated, stereo imagery became possible which gave photographic intelligence a key role in times of conflict. During the Second World War, RAF Medmenham based at Danesfield House near Marlow in Berkshire

was the secret headquarters for the interpretation of the millions of photographs taken by Allied planes flying over Europe. Targets for bombing raids were identified using this intelligence and the results analysed and interpreted from further aerial photography. Crucial aerial discoveries included the German radar at Bruneval in Northern France, and the V1 and V2 rockets at Peenemunde on the Baltic coast. Planning for the Allied invasion in Normandy depended on aerial reconnaissance to identify the scale of enemy defences and suitable landing sites along the coast. But it was also used by the Ministry of Town and Country Planning to identify bomb sites and to assist the post-war reconstruction programme. The resulting collection includes 1.26 million negatives and more than 2,000 photograph albums. Dating from 1919 to 2006, it presents an unparalleled picture of the changing face of Britain. It includes the largest and most significant number of air photographs of Britain taken before 1939. The collection is varied and includes urban, suburban, rural, coastal and industrial scenes, providing important evidence for understanding and managing the built and natural environments as well as identifying potential archaeological sites.

A selection of sites from the archive that might be familiar to those of us living in Monmouthshire will be presented by David Thomas from the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMMW) on February 16th via Zoom, starting at 7.30pm. You must be a member to receive a link. For details visit www.abergavennylocalhistorysociety.org.uk

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Varteg Hill in Abersychan Photo by Kasia Ociepa

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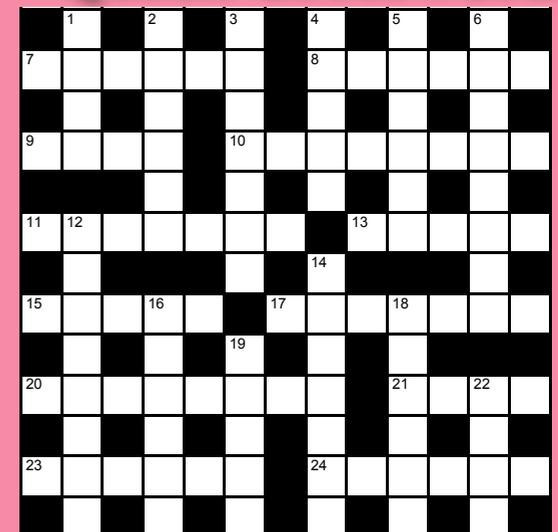
ACROSS

- 7 Not occupied (6)
8 Musical dramas (6)
9 Vehicle for hire (4)
10 Opposite (8)
11 Not as dark (7)
13 Old coin (5)
15 Regularly (5)
17 Culinary herb (7)
20 Very cold (8)
21 Relax (4)
23 Large fight (6)
24 Hinder (6)

DOWN

- 1 Mother (4)
2 Disappear (6)
3 Piled up (7)
4 Connects (5)
5 Closer to (6)
6 Railway coach (8)
12 Casual (8)
14 Haggle (7)
16 Votes for (6)
18 Scratch (6)
19 Repairs (5)
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