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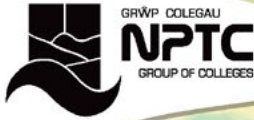


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17 January 2023

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Dear Readers,



When I was little, I was allowed to stay up late to watch *Open All Hours*. It felt like such a treat and I always dreaded the epilogue part when Ronnie Barker would reflect on how it had been 'a funny sort of day,' because that meant bedtime. I'm taken back to those words when looking back over the past twelve months. It's been a funny sort of year, hasn't it? Nowadays I think we have all become sort of used to the turbulent nature of the world and while that builds an element of resilience, it does feel as though we are living through remarkably challenging times.

Many, many people will be struggling in one capacity or another this Christmas. It's tricky to offer words of comfort or hope without sounding glib, and I don't think it's my job to do that. My job is, however, to put together a magazine that might go some way to lifting your spirit in these tricky times. Hopefully we've done that for you in the articles that we've selected to share with you this month and there's certainly a great deal of joy to gain from the many local activities and events taking place during December, many of which are free to attend!

As we come to the end of this year both Pete and I would like to thank you all for being such positive and receptive readers of our magazine. We are always so touched when you contact us with messages of how much you enjoy the magazine - thank you. We are also and forever indebted to our advertisers who are so loyal and so supportive and, without whom, our magazines could not exist.

Wishing you all a very happy, safe and enjoyable Christmas.

With Love and Best Wishes,

Hannah

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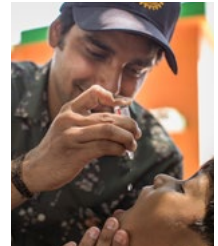
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The launch of a new green guide for Powys residents and businesses will be a 'go to' place for environmentally friendly suppliers, and a range of actions to take part in to create a greener, more cohesive and more prosperous Powys.

After much preparation and expert input, Powys Action on the Climate Emergency (PACE) has produced an interactive website for people and organisations across the county. It will enable anyone to get involved and share ideas on how individuals can make small but significant contributions to helping fight the crisis affecting the climate and nature.

"From taking easy steps to make sure your bank or pension fund is not investing your money in planet wrecking business, to knowing which phone to buy

to minimise its environmental footprint, we want all to share ideas and experiences" said the project coordinator Diana Allen.



"Wherever you live in the county, there are simple, small, low or no cost tweaks people can make, and the more that follow your example, the more effect it has. Powys is a big county, and this website aims to bring people and communities together, as 'Team Powys'.

"Green community organisations

and businesses can list on the site and create their own page. Organisers of environment friendly events can post here - all for free. Online is a great way to network every corner of our large County".

Powys based green businesses are encouraged to list themselves on the guide, so residents can easily find them, buy local and 'greenswap' - that is, swapping your usual brand for an environmentally friendly version. The aim is to help the entire county community to work together for the planet, the local economy and the future, creating a greener and more prosperous Powys.

CLLr Charlton said "We all know that the worlds temperature is rising, we all know we have a climate emergency on our hands, but that doesn't mean to say that we can't do something about it."

She continued, "There has never been a better time for young and old, town and country, to come together and join forces to secure a sustainable and prosperous future. The Green Guide is here to help all of us do just that."

The launch will be online on Monday 5th December at 7.30pm. Information at www.pacepowys.cymru/Powys-Green-Guide-Launch



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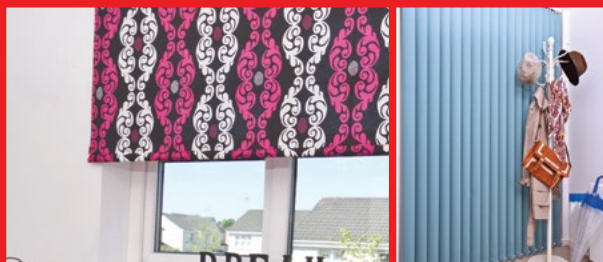
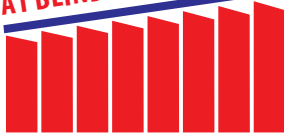
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Brecon Mountain Rescue Reaches Fundraising Target for New HQ



Brecon Mountain Rescue Team

Brecon Mountain Rescue Team has announced that a fundraising appeal to build a much-needed new headquarters has been successful – and the project can now go full steam ahead.

The dedicated team of volunteers provide an emergency rescue service 24-hours a day, 365 days-a-year – saving the lives of those most in need, throughout mid Wales. The growing demand for their help means they are in urgent need of a new base.

For the past year the team have been raising funds for the project – and have successfully secured grants and donations, including from a public fundraising appeal, totalling the £1.1 million needed for the new headquarters on the outskirts of Brecon.

This will enable them to respond more quickly to emergencies, train as one team together, and expand their community educational activities. The new HQ will also have a training room available for other community organisations to use for their own purposes.

Brecon Mountain Rescue Team leader, Dr Rob Powell, said: “We are thrilled that we finally have the funds to build our new headquarters. Our members have been planning this for many years, and it is wonderful that it is now going to happen.

“We are so very grateful to the many people who have helped us to achieve this, and those who have displayed great generosity. It means that our dedicated volunteers can continue saving lives throughout mid Wales, for many decades to come.”

Rob added: “We can access places that no other service can reach. As well as finding, treating, and rescuing walkers, climbers, fell-runners, mountain bikers and kayakers, we also help the most vulnerable in our communities - people living with dementia, people suffering with their mental health, flood victims, and missing adults and children.”

Planning permission for the new building, which will be on the same site as the existing one on the Ffrwdrech industrial estate, has already been granted, and the team are hoping that work will begin in the spring – to be completed by the end of 2023.

The team still need to continue their fundraising efforts as they have to raise £55,000 themselves, every year, for their day-to-day operating costs as they receive no government or external funding and operate entirely on a voluntary basis.

In addition, although the £1.1m total project cost includes a contingency, the current economic crisis which has seen costs rise dramatically, means that the team want to boost funds further in order to create a comfortable cushion for the project.

To find out more about how you can support Brecon Mountain Rescue Team, please visit www.breconmrt.co.uk. To make a donation, please visit www.justgiving.com/breconmrt/donate



An artist's impression of the new BMRT HQ





Dŵr Cymru
Welsh Water



IMPROVING
OUR
RIVER
QUALITY

GWELLA
ANSAWDD
EIN
HAFONYDD

As a company, we take our responsibilities to protect the environment seriously. This is why we have been developing plans to protect the quality of the water in the river Usk. Our research, with Natural Resources Wales, shows that our assets (i.e. our treatment works, Combined Storm Overflows or CSOs) are responsible for 21%-23% of the phosphates in the river Usk, with CSOs only responsible for 1%. The remainder, is caused by other factors such as rural land use and animal faeces, urban surface water drainage, misconnected drains, as well as private septic tanks.

Our assets play a key role in protecting the local community from flooding and we cannot simply remove CSOs as this would cause significant disruption. However, we understand that this is an important matter for local residents and we are committed to playing our part to reducing our impact on the river Usk.

To find out more about what we're doing to help improve river water quality, visit dwrwymru.com/riverwaterquality



Fel cwmni, rydym yn cymryd ein cyfrifoldebau i ddiogelu'r amgylchedd o ddfiri. Dyno pam ein bod ni wedi bod yn datblygu cynlluniau i ddiogelu ansawdd y dŵr yn afon Wysg. Mae ein hymchwil gyda Chyfoeth Naturiol Cymru yn dangos taw ein hasedau (h.y. ein gweithfeydd trin a'n Gorlifoedd Storm Cyfun neu CSOs) sy'n gyfrifol am 21%-23% o'r ffosffadau yn afon Wysg, a'r Gorlifoedd Storm Cyfun sy'n gyfrifol am gwa't 1% ohonynt. Ffactorau eraill, fel defnydd tir gwledig ac ysgarthion anifeiliaid, draenio dŵr wyneb trefol, draeniau sydd wedi'u cam-gysylltu, yn ogystal â thanciau septig preifat, sydd i gyfrif am y gweddill.

Mae ein hasedau'n chwarae rhan allweddol wrth amddiffyn y gymuned leol rhag llifogydd ac ni allwn gael gwared ar y CSOs am y byddai hynny'n drafferthus dros ben i bobw. Fodd bynnag, rydym ni'n deall bod hwn yn fater pwysig i drigolion lleol, ac rydym ni wedi ymrwymo i chwarae ein rhan i leihau ein heffaith ar afon Wysg.

I ddarganfod mwy am yr hyn rydym yn ei wneud i helpu gwella ansawdd dŵr afonydd, ewch i dwrwymru.com/riverwaterquality



Why was the Bear Purple for Five Days in October?



Monday 24th of October was World Polio Day and celebrated the huge progress that has been made in eradicating this awful disease. In 1985 Rotary spearheaded the campaign, when there were over 1,000 polio cases a day in 125 countries, paralysing and even killing children.

Today, the number of cases is down by 99.9%.

Because of the efforts of Rotary and our partners, nearly 19 million people who would otherwise have been paralysed are walking, and more than 1.5 million people are alive who would otherwise have died.

In developing countries around the world, children who have been vaccinated under this programme have their little finger tinted purple.

National Polio day, falling as it did within a week of the 40th Anniversary of the founding of the Rotary Club in Crickhowell, is highly significant in the history of the Club and its association

with matters of local national and international significance.

Crickhowell Rotary Club has regarded the Bear Hotel as its home throughout the club's 40 year history. The owners Stephen and Samantha Hindmarsh have been enthusiastic supporters of the club since the clubs inception in 1982 when Mrs Judy Hindmarsh was the proprietor.

World polio week was to be no exception and their decision to support the promotion of this important milestone in the life of Rotary in general and for the club in particular, is indicative of the strength of the relationship between The Bear Hotel and Crickhowell Rotary,

Commenting, Stephen Hindmarsh said " Illuminating The Bear in purple to mark National Polio Week and the 40th anniversary of the

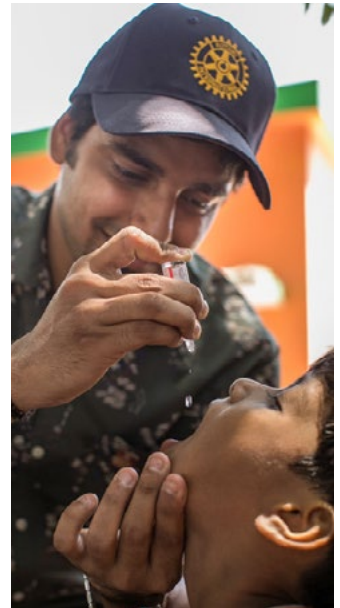
founding of the Rotary Club in Crickhowell was a great pleasure."

Rotary members in Great Britain and Ireland have been huge supporters of End Polio Now and continue to work towards 100% eradication in places like Pakistan and Afghanistan

Readers who may be interested in making a positive difference in our world are invite to consider joining the club so it can continue such important work.

Readers are invited to contact our Membership Secretary, David Treasure on 01873 810209 or email drtreasure@gmail.com

Dave Thomas



Rotary
The Rotary Club of Crickhowell



2023 Castell Roc Dates Released

After the fabulous events at Castell Roc 2022, held inside the absolutely beautiful grounds of Chepstow Castle, organiser Carol Mutlow, of Hannah's Music, is already putting the acts together for 2023.

Now in its 12th year, the festival gets bigger every year, and 2022 was no exception, with Chepstow still buzzing from 2022's fantastic sold-out events!

"The problem is," says Carol, "it makes me wonder how I can top that! But - I will certainly try!

Next year we have some fantastic events lined up for you, with many new acts, never seen before at Castell Roc and hopefully something for everyone, no matter what your taste in music, that's what makes Castell Roc stand out from other festivals, the variety of music, plus of course, the absolutely breath-taking venue!"

Each week, one act will be released until all 13 nights have been revealed, therefore Focus magazine is able to bring you the first 6 events for Castell Roc 2023.

AND IT'S LOOKING PRETTY AMAZING ALREADY... and tickets make a great Christmas present !!

More information and tickets contact - www.castellroc.co.uk



Presented by **castell Roc**
Welsh Legends Festival
 Friday - 11th August - 2023
 Chepstow Castle
 With Grants Available
Stereosonics
 OH! What's Occurring?
 Featuring Compos. **Nessa Tribute..**
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 See TICKETS

BIG DAY PRODUCTIONS IN ASSOCIATION WITH CASTELL ROC PRODUCEY PRESENT
PLEASE STAY CALM ITS ONLY MASSIVE WAGONS GUN
 RAIDING THE RAMPARTS
SAT AUG 12TH CHEPSTOW CASTLE
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 GATES OPEN 6.30PM - TICKETS FROM
www.ticketwales.co.uk / www.castellroc.co.uk
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Back into Hell
 A TRIBUTE TO MEAT LOAF & JIM STEINMAN
THU 17 AUG 2023 CHEPSTOW CASTLE
 Gates open 18.30
 Box Office: Hannah's Music, Moor St, Chepstow, 01291 627122
 Book online: www.showplan.com | www.castellroc.co.uk

A SUMMER EVENING WITH
JASON DONOVAN
 INSIDE THE STUNNING VENUE:
CHEPSTOW CASTLE
 Saturday 19th Aug. 2023
 Gates 8.30, Curfew 23.00
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 Plus special guests
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 Box Office: Hannah's Music, Chepstow, 01291 627122
 See TICKETS

BIG DAY PRODUCTIONS IN ASSOCIATION WITH BRIGER TROUPE & CASTELL ROC PRESENT
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 CARDIFF
 PLUS GUESTS **KIRAMAC** & **THE PHILO BEDDOW BAND**
CHEPSTOW CASTLE
THUR 24 AUGUST 2023
 TICKETS AVAILABLE FROM WWW.TICKETWALES.CO.UK & WWW.CASTELLROC.CO.UK
 OR IN PERSON FROM DERRICKS MUSIC - SWANSEA 01792 654225 & HANNAH'S MUSIC, CHEPSTOW 01291 627122

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HELLS/BELLS
DIZZY
DRESSED TO KILL
 THE WORLDS LONGEST RUNNING TRIBUTE TO PINK FLOYD
 Gates 08.30 - Curfew 23.00
Friday 25th August Chepstow Castle
 Tickets via www.castellroc.co.uk
 Box Office: Hannah's Music, Chepstow, 01291 627122
 See TICKETS

DECEMBER 2022 EVENTS

3RD DECEMBER

CRICKHOWELL VINTAGE, ANTIQU & MAKERS MARKET

An exciting array of vintage delights and artisan creations. Tea room and homemade cakes available.

*10am-4pm, Clarence Hall,
Crickhowell, NP8 1BN*

3RD DECEMBER

Hope Church presents: VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS MARKET AND MUSIC



Step back in time and enjoy a festive market with a Victorian twist. Enjoy market stalls, Santa's Grotto, mulled wine, a tearoom, homemade cakes and plenty more for the whole family to enjoy.
Free Entry
3pm-6pm, Gilwern Community Centre

8TH DECEMBER ABERGAVENTY GARDEN CENTRE CHRISTMAS MARKET

Come and soak up the festive spirit. Enjoy browsing the over 30 craft stalls of Christmas gift ideas and treats. Refuel and refresh at our food and drink vans too!
3pm-8pm

10TH DECEMBER HAY CHRISTMAS FAYRE



Bringing some festive cheer to the centre of Hay, over *60* traders join Hay's independent high street to bring you unique Christmas gifts, local crafts, food and drink.
10am-3pm

17TH-18TH DECEMBER HAY CASTLE CHRISTMAS FAIR

Handmade Christmas Fair with over 40 stalls full of everything Christmas. Come along and join in the merriment, enjoy a glass of mulled wine, and visit the Snow Queen in Hay Castle on the 17th & 18th of December.
Free Entry to the Castle

17TH-18TH DECEMBER NATIONAL GARDEN SCHEME – DECEMBER OPENING

Japanese inspired Garden with borrowed views to Offa's Dyke. Winding paths pass small pools and lead to Japanese bridges over natural stream with dippers and kingfishers.

Evening opening (4-6pm)
Tranquility Haven, 7 Lords Land, Whitton, Knighton LD2 3HU, no teas.

18TH DECEMBER BRECON CHRISTMAS MARKET



All markets shall feature a wealth of traders and a Santa's Grotto will feature, with Santa visiting Brecon, provisional price will be £3 per child.
Brecon Flea Market

SEND US YOUR EVENTS

Go to <https://thefocus.wales/calendar/>

A Note about Events. *All the events listed are correct at the time of publishing. We strongly recommend double checking dates and times prior to attending an event to ensure these have not changed. Focus Magazines accepts no responsibility for errors or omissions*



Warm WiFi and Free events at Theatr Brycheiniog

To support the local community and audiences through the cost-of-living crisis, Theatr Brycheiniog will be running several free events this December, along with opening public spaces within the building as a safe and warm space to be.

With a cost of living and climate crisis, many of us are facing tough decisions. Some of us have moved to working from home following the pandemic and are facing a winter with increased energy bills, others are facing harder decisions about whether to heat or eat.

From now until Thursday 22nd December, our bar area will be an open warm space and working area. Visitors will be able to access our high-quality free Wi-Fi, work, or meet in our safe and functioning environment. By using our open space, you become a Theatr B! Open Space Member and you will be entitled to refillable filter coffee and tea (£2.20 for the original cup) and a 10% discount in our café.

A free midday movie will be shown on Monday 5th December. Keep an eye on our social media for updates on what film is being shown closer to the date!

David Wilson, the Theatr's Director said "we are passionate about our role in the community across the region, and want to support as much as we can. Our season of ticketed shows and events is always very important, but as well as the paid for performances and free gallery we can also provide entertainment, activity and access to warm spaces through an additional programme of free events. If this proves popular we will continue this into the early months of next year. Its important for us to work as a civic theatre, as we are your theatre, and we are there for you."

Theatr Brycheiniog will be collecting for Brecon Food Bank this winter. You can help by partaking in Brecon Foodbank's Gift Angels 2022. The angels will be located on a garland on the Box Office's desk in the theatre's foyer. To be involved, you will need to pick one or more of the Gift Angel tags, buy a gift using the information on the tag (no more than £10), fasten the tag securely to the gift and return the gift to a member of the team at Box Office before 1pm on Monday, 5th December.

We will also be collecting for Brecon Foodbanks 2022 Christmas

Shopping List. Please donate items by 13th December at the very latest, preferably earlier, in order to process and distribute them before Christmas. We kindly ask that no Christmas crackers are donated and to ensure 'best before' dates are after Christmas, and remember we cannot use outdated, fresh or refrigerated items, or alcohol.

The 2022 Christmas Shopping List includes:

Christmas savoury snacks

- Tinned ham
- Christmas and Christmassy cakes
- Mince pies
- Christmas biscuits / shortbreads
- Christmas chocolates / sweets
- Christmas puddings
- Hot chocolate

For further information, and to book tickets, please contact Theatr Brycheiniog's Box Office on 01874 611 622 where a member of our Visitor Experience Team will be more than happy to help. You can also book online 24/7 and get information on all upcoming performances and events at www.brycheiniog.co.uk



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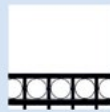


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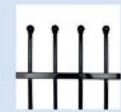
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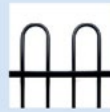
Decorative Ring



Fleur de lys



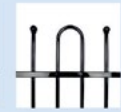
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Bow Top



Loop & Fleur de lys



Loop & Ball



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ALL ABOARD THE

The Polar Express!

WIN £200 IN TIME FOR CHRISTMAS!

Come on in, it's warm and cosy and there's hot chocolate for everyone.

We're delighted to launch our Christmas Competition this year, supporting Wales Air Ambulance.

As you can see, we have printed a number of Golden Polar Express Tickets, each sponsored by one of our truly wonderful local independent businesses. These tickets form the basis of our competition so be sure to keep hold of this page so you can take part and be in with a chance of winning £200 in cash!


As in the movie, our magical ticket inspector will be punching holes in the tickets throughout December to reveal a magical word on each ticket. The magical words will be revealed on our website and via Facebook throughout December, so it's your job to keep checking. Each magical word will correspond to a specific golden ticket, and you must write the correct word into the white box on the correct ticket. Once you have filled in all of the tickets, take a photo of them all, send the photo to us at hello@thefocus.wales to enter the prize draw to win the £200 cash. Don't forget to include your name and contact details. You must be over 18 to enter. Full competition details can be found on our website www.thefocus.wales

As with all of our annual Christmas competitions, we cherish the chance to support local charitable causes. This year we have

decided to support Wales Air Ambulance. To make a donation, simply visit www.thefocus.wales/polarexpress and purchase a Hot Chocolate for just £2.50. This money will form your donation to Wales Air Ambulance. Focus Magazines will also be donating all profits from ticket sponsorship from this competition to this deserving cause.


Don't forget to keep checking our competition pages throughout December by visiting www.thefocus.wales/polarexpress and keeping an eye on our Facebook page @TheFocusMagazine where we will also reveal the magical words for the Golden Tickets.





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A Little Bit of Hygge

Hygge. It's a thing. Have you heard of it yet? If not, then you're sure to very soon – in this article in fact. Hygge has also been listed as a word of the year by both the Collins and Oxford Dictionaries, so what's it all about?

Hygge is a Danish word and its exact translation is difficult to pinpoint (a bit like the word *cwch* in Welsh – the English translation always lacks something). But in an effort to offer you a meaning, it is something like 'cosiness' and the act of enjoying simple pleasures.

Christmas, it seems, is the epitome of hygge; picture the scene of a family relaxing around a rustic farmhouse table, happily enjoying their Christmas day starter of pumpkin soup with thick wedges of sourdough, kitted out in fairisle knits, maybe a cashmere sock or two... all in the warm glow of candlelight. That's hygge. It's a seductive image isn't it, which is why the hygge movement appears

to be so popular and gaining so much momentum here in the UK. According to the social media site, Pinterest, there has been a year-on-year rise of 285% hygge-themed pinning.

The tradition, craze, convention, movement – whatever you want to call it - is a good one to adopt, defined by warmth, cosiness, retreating from the world and enjoying time with loved ones. It seems particularly apt at this time of year too. And, with our world full of so many troubles and uncertainties, I think we could all do with a little bit of hygge in our lives.

A TONGUE-IN-CHEEK GUIDE ON HOW TO ACHIEVE INSTANT HYGGE

Build a fire, drink some wine, preferably mulled, put on some cosy socks: that's hygge!

Light all the tealights you own, put them into empty jam jars. Turn off all the lights.

Put blankets over the arms of your sofas and armchairs.

Scatter cushions everywhere.

Make a hot chocolate with whipped cream and marshmallows, then read a book. Extra hygge marks if it's absolutely binning it down outside.

Bung a whole shoulder of lamb in the oven to cook for many many hours and enjoy how the aroma fills the house. Remember to include rosemary and garlic for ultimate hygge points.

Wear anything made of cashmere.

Hand-make all of your Christmas decorations out of leaves, twigs, twine and paper. Bonus points if you can find a rosy-cheeked child to help!

Make gingerbread

Throw about handfuls of Autumn leaves with gay abandon while wearing a bobble hat and ludicrously expensive wellies

Moment of Calm



Settle

If we are lucky enough to enjoy snow during this festive season, take time to watch it falling from the sky - see how it falls and glides. If not real snow, try a snow globe...shake it up and feel your body settle with the snow. A candle, or twinkling lights can provide a similar stimulus. Take a moment to focus on the light, breathing slowly and deeply and feeling your body calm.





For anyone who doesn't particularly like Christmas pudding or rich fruit cake, this Roulade makes a decadent alternative. It keeps in the refrigerator for up to 3 days, so can be made well in advance of the Big Event.

Raspberry Hazelnut Chocolate Roulade

Ingredients

For the meringue

- 4 large egg whites
- 200g caster sugar
- 1 tsp cornflour
- 1 tsp lemon juice

For the filling:

- 200ml double cream
- 1 tsp vanilla bean paste
- 1 punnet raspberries
- 25g chopped hazelnuts
- 100g white chocolate

For the Coulis

- 1 punnet raspberries
- 2tbsp icing sugar

Preheat oven 160 degrees celcius/140 Fan/gas mark 3 and line the base of a swiss roll tin 33cm x 23cm with parchment paper

1. Whisk your egg whites until they hold soft peaks and the mixture stays in the bowl if turned upside down (be careful not to overbeat as this causes the eggs to collapse.)

2. Whisk in your caster sugar about a tablespoon at a time, whisking all the time until all the sugar has been added and the mixture is stiff and glossy. Beat in the cornflour and lemon juice

3. Spoon into the prepared tin, spreading the meringue evenly. Bake for 25 minutes until a light golden crust forms. Remove from the oven and cool in the tin for approximately 5 minutes

4. Cut a piece of greaseproof paper that is slightly larger than the baking tin and lightly dust it with icing sugar. Gently invert the meringue on to the paper. Remove the tin, leaving the parchment paper on the meringue until completely cold

5. Make the filling by melting the chocolate in a small bowl over a pan of simmering water, making sure the water does not touch the bottom of the bowl. When the chocolate has melted remove from the heat and cool

6. Whip the cream and vanilla bean paste until the cream just holds its shape. Gently fold in the cooled chocolate

7. Remove the parchment paper from the meringue and spread over the cream mixture evenly. Scatter over the hazelnuts and raspberries. Using the paper underneath the meringue to help, roll up the meringue from the short edge. Some cracking may appear but this adds to the log effect. Gently place on a serving dish and dust with icing sugar

8. Make the coulis by blending the raspberries and icing sugar until smooth. Sieve into a jug and drizzle a little over the log, leaving the remainder to serve.



ICED SPICED CHRISTMAS BISCUITS (LEBKUCHEN)

I bake a batch of these lovely biscuits about a week before Christmas to give to my friends and neighbours. They make a lovely homemade gift when presented in a pretty cellophane bag with a bow popped on them. As they keep extremely well, I always have a cookie jar topped up to offer to visitors over the festive season.

INGREDIENTS:

(makes approx 30)

- 250g plain flour
- 85g ground almonds
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/2tsp bicarbonate of soda
- 1 tsp baking powder
- Pinch each of ground cloves, grated nutmeg and black pepper
- 175ml honey
- 25ml maple syrup
- Finely grated zest of 1 lemon
- 85g butter
- For the icing
- 100g icing sugar
- 1 beaten egg white

1. Tip all the dry ingredients into a large bowl
2. Gently heat the honey, maple syrup and butter in a pan until the butter melts and then pour into all the dry ingredients
3. Add the lemon zest and stir the mixture until all combined into a fairly stiff dough.
4. Cover with cling film and leave to cool.
5. Heat oven to 180C/150CFan/Gas 4.
6. Line 2 baking trays with baking parchment
7. Using your hands roll pieces of dough about the size of a walnut, then flatten each slightly into a disk and place on the baking sheets, leaving a little room between each for them to spread.
8. Bake for 15 mins, then cool on a wire rack.
9. Ice the biscuits by mixing together the icing sugar and egg white to form a smooth runny icing, you may need to add 1-2 tbsps water.
10. Dip the top of each biscuit in the icing and smooth out, leave to dry before storing them in an airtight container.



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Uninvited Guests

“I don’t let them rent out a room in my head.” ~ Chip Chipman



Do you have someone in your life that makes your heart sink? Some ‘special’ person who seems to have a real knack for draining the joy out of each and every encounter? (Be honest. It’s ok, I won’t tell.)

If you’re busy picturing them now, I’m willing to bet your spirits just dropped (sorry about that), but... hang on a minute, what do you *make* of that? How is it that this person can make you feel lousy, when they’re not even there?

It all comes down to a straightforward, but very convincing trick of the mind that works exactly the same for all of us: we don’t actually *experience* difficult people. What we experience is our thinking *about* them. And this holds true for all of life. Quite literally, moment to moment, we are feeling our own thought processes; it’s *all* we get.

This immediately explains how it’s possible for them to ruin your day from afar. (And, incidentally, why their friends don’t find them quite as obnoxious as you do.)

As outlandish as it might seem, we are all walking around in our own little thought-created worlds,

believing them to be ‘the way it is’, when in reality there are as many versions of that ‘difficult’ person as there are people who’ve met them... and *none* are true.

I know – it’s enough to make your head spin! The good news is, you don’t have to buy into this in order for it to help you have a very different experience. Try holding it lightly and just play with the idea while we prepare for your next meet-up.

So, how much of the suffering we do, on behalf of these supposedly ‘difficult’ people is going on in our minds? We might be driving to theirs, reflecting on their past transgressions and anticipating how bad this coming encounter is likely to be... all of which is the equivalent of hitting ourselves over the head with our own thoughts, and then wondering why we have such a headache.

If you really want to get one over on them, why not let *yourself* off the hook, and stop doing that? It won’t cost you a penny, and your life will instantly improve.

“But Giles, I do actually have to spend time with them!” I hear you bemoan, and I’m here to remind you, gently, that it can only work

one way. Even in their presence—however it looks—the irritation you feel comes not from them, but from the activity of the mind, as it compares and judges and delivers its long list of impossible demands that it thinks it needs, to be ok in the presence of this person...

This is the true uninvited guest here, and to see that, is enough. We’re human so we will never be free from its chatter. But as we get wise to its nature we start to take our thinking far less seriously and we realise our freedom, in *spite* of it.

It all comes back to this one simple fact: when we are less bothered by our thinking *about* something, we’re less bothered by the something.

‘Difficult’ people included.



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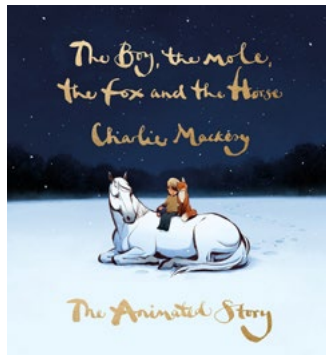
This trick of the mind is one of “Two Brain-Facts That Change Everything” – a short video I made for you, that can be watched for free over at <https://gilesproft.com/free>.

Christmas Books



What could be better than unwrapping a beautiful book on Christmas Morning? They make the perfect gift to give and receive. This month the booksellers at Book-ish select their pick of titles to gift to others, or just to keep for yourself. Merry Christmas!

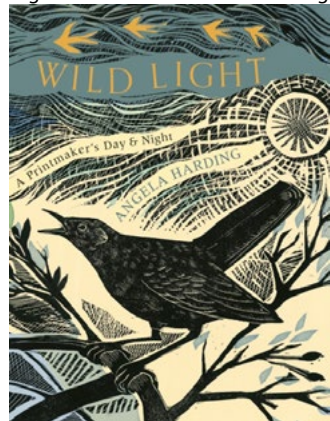
The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse:
The Animated Story
Charlie Mackesy
£20



A journey, in search of home. Charlie Mackesy's beloved *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse* has been adapted into an animated short film, coming to BBC One and iPlayer this Christmas. This beautifully made hardback celebrates the work of over 100 animators across two years of production - with Charlie's distinctive illustrations brought to life in full colour with hand-drawn traditional animation and accompanying hand-written script.

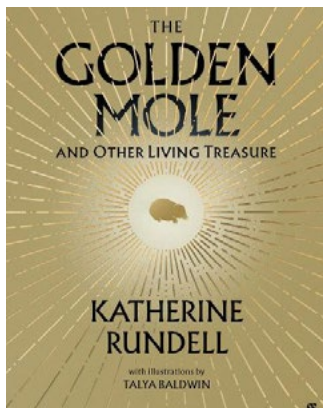
Wild Light
Angela Harding
£25

The acclaimed printmaker and author of *A Year Unfolding* gathers together a selection of breathtaking



illustrations influenced by the properties of light on landscape and creatures.

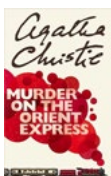
With over 70 original illustrations, printmaker Angela Harding invites you to look at how the light changes the world around us, and how that changes us in its turn.



The Golden Mole Katherine Rundell

£14.99

A pangolin's tongue is longer than its body. It keeps it furled in a nifty pouch near the hip. A swift flies two million kilometres in its lifetime. That's far enough to get to the moon and back twice over - and then once more to the moon. There's a fable that storks deliver babies. In fact, the Nazis used them to air-drop propaganda. Each of these animals is extraordinary. And each of them may soon disappear from the earth. A lavishly illustrated compendium of the staggering lives of some of the world's most endangered animals, *The Golden Mole* is a chance to be awestruck and lovestruck - to fall for the likes of the seahorse, the narwhal and, as astonishing and endangered as them all, the human.



Murder On The Orient Express Agatha Christie

£8.99

Just after midnight, a snowdrift stops the Orient Express in its tracks.

The luxurious train is surprisingly full for the time of the year, but by the morning it is one passenger fewer. An American tycoon lies dead in his compartment, stabbed a dozen times, his door locked from the inside.

Isolated and with a killer in their midst, detective Hercule Poirot must identify the murderer - in case he or she decides to strike again.

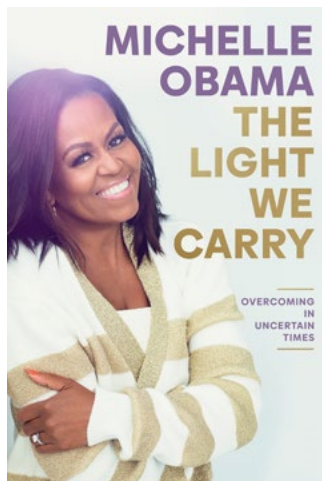


The Final Whistle Nigel Owens

£20

The story of the second half of Nigel's career as one of the most famous referees in World Rugby, and one of only two Welsh refs ever to officiate at a Rugby World Cup Final.

With his contract with the Welsh Rugby Union having come to an end in 2020, he is free to reveal all about his career and to speak his mind on various issues and to give the full story of his last Rugby World Cup in 2019.



The Light We Carry: Overcoming In Uncertain Times Michelle Obama

£25

From the former First Lady and author of the global bestseller *Becoming* comes an inspirational volume of personal insight and wisdom, aimed at illuminating the complexities of relationships, communities and identity for everyone.

How do we build enduring and honest relationships? How can we discover strength and community inside our differences? What do we do when it all starts to feel like too much?

Michelle Obama believes that when we light up for others, we can illuminate the richness and potential of the world around us, discovering deeper truths and new pathways for progress.

The Light We Carry will inspire readers to examine their own lives, identify their sources of gladness, and connect meaningfully in a turbulent world.

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Christmas at CRiC



Trysorua Cymraeg

Crickhowell is a perfect destination this time of the year. No visit to the town would be complete without a visit to CRiC with its range of gifts, foodie treats, books, guides, jewellery & cards – many of which are exclusive to CRiC. Whether a tote bag, an Angela Harding diary or a beautiful notebook takes your fancy or not, they are all among the many affordable gifts on offer.

Having added to the range of foodie delights for the festive season, it is hard to resist treats such as hand cut white

chocolate and cranberry smooth fudge or a Brecon chocolate stirrer. Welsh foodie treats are always a welcome gift. A sense of the local area and of Wales prevails in the range of books and guides on offer – exploring the Brecon Beacons and Black Mountains in a myriad of ways or finding the odd Welsh dragon. Sending one of the cards designed by Crickhowell based artists to those who 'wish they were here' is sure to warm their hearts.

The oriel CRiC gallery with its inspiring Christmas exhibition featuring a wide range of paintings, sculptures, ceramics,

glass, prints and jewellery is a treasure trove in which you are sure to find that special gift for family and friends or to lift your spirit with something special for your home. It is also a beautiful and welcoming space to enjoy the creativity and beauty of the work exhibited.

The gallery is brought alive by colour, design and artistry in many forms. Glass blower and sculptor Karlin Rushbrooke's decorative glass adds glowing and beautiful colour and David England's Ancaster stone pieces 'Another Journey' and 'Rivermaid' adds wonderment to the exhibition. Both functional and

sculptural ceramics contribute to a festive exhibition.

Every exhibition is a celebration of the skill and creativity of the exhibiting artists and Christmas is no exception. Gifts made by hand can only bring joy to both the giver and the recipient. From original paintings to the tiniest of decorations, there is sure to be something to suit every taste and pocket.

The staff and volunteers look forward to warmly welcoming visitors and wish all a happy and safe festive season.

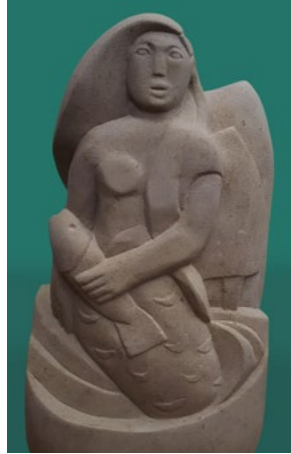
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Suzette Pratton

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Jewellery by Jill Derbyshire, Glasswear by Karlin Rushbrooke, Celtic Guardian by Valerie James, River Maid by David England



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HENRY HEDGEHOG'S PUZZLE PAGE

Henry Hedgehog is in Lapland on a Winter holiday and has decided to go exploring.

Unfortunately his rucksack got swept away by the water. Can you direct Henry through the ice to collect his **rucksack**?

START



HOW MANY SNOWFLAKES YOU CAN SEE?

MAKE SURE HENRY COLLECTS HIS COMPASS AND TORCH ON THE WAY!

FINISH

PUZZLES SPOT THE DIFFERENCE



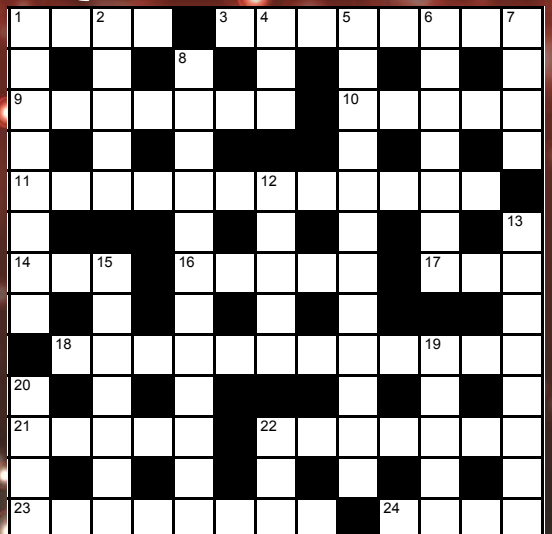
Quick Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Harbour (4)
- 3 Precious stones (8)
- 9 Implement (7)
- 10 Concur (5)
- 11 Produced (12)
- 14 Short sleep (3)
- 16 Coarse (5)
- 17 Pronoun (3)
- 18 Despite (12)
- 21 Modify (5)
- 22 Design (7)
- 23 Daily (8)
- 24 Musical instrument (4)

DOWN

- 1 Imagining (8)
- 2 Wash (5)
- 4 Frozen water (3)
- 5 Sizes (12)
- 6 Crèche (7)
- 7 Vomit (4)
- 8 Adequately (12)
- 12 Enumerate (5)
- 13 Pest (8)
- 15 Make ready (7)
- 19 All (5)
- 20 Imitation (4)
- 22 Vegetable (3)



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Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a joyfull New Year.



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