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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 dwrcymru.com/riverwaterquality



Fel cwmni, rydym yn cymryd ein cyfrifoldebau i ddiogelu'r amgylchedd o ddifri. Dyna 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 ffosffodau yn afon Wysg, a'r Gorlifoedd Storm Cyfun sy'n gyfrifol am gwta 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 bawb. 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 dwrcymru.com/riverwaterquality



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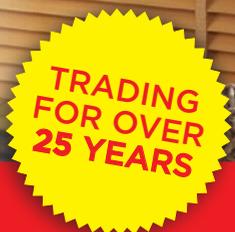


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Dear Readers,



Even though February is the shortest month of the year, many view it as the most depressing. It's cold, the days are short and February 14th can be difficult to navigate for many. BUT! Take a leaf through the pages of this month's magazine and I can guarantee that you'll find so much to be positive and hopeful about. In spite of February being bleak for many, there's no shortage of events and activities to look forward to in the coming weeks. There's Crickhowell Walking Festival to check out, litter picking to consider becoming involved in and Brecon Women's Festival to celebrate. If you have creative offspring then perhaps they will be interested in getting involved in the Abergavenny Writing Festival competition, and if you have some spare time yourself, why not think about volunteering at the CRIC Centre. So! No resting on your laurels this February. Forget about hibernating until it's over...get out there and get involved and embrace February in all its grey-skied glory! Enjoy this month's read,

Hannah

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Broaden your horizons

You have the chance to shine

We are currently enrolling for this years award scheme. Are you aged 14-24 years of age? Would you like to do your Duke of Edinburgh's Bronze, Silver or Gold Award?



Crickhowell Volunteer Bureau are a local Duke of Edinburgh's licensed organisation offering the opportunity for young people aged 14-24 years to enrol in the award scheme. All equipment is provided whether you choose to do a walking or canoeing expedition and the best part is you only pay for your licence and campsite fees.

Get involved and take this opportunity to be part of a fun-packed, challenging and adventurous programme that's recognised nationally and internationally.

The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is one of the world's best known and most respected achievement awards—and now you have the chance to enrol in the programme. We offer both walking and canoeing expeditions in a variety of venues such as Brecon Beacons, Black Mountains, Elan Valley, North Wales, River Wye and Severn and also on Lakes in Scotland.

Duke of Edinburgh's Award is an achievement award for young people aged 14-24, affectionately known as the DofE. A DofE programme is a real adventure from beginning to end. It doesn't matter who you are or where you're from. You just need to be aged between 14 and 24 and realise there's more to life than sitting on a sofa watching life pass you by.

There are three levels of award, achieved by completing a personal programme of activities in four sections (five if you're going for Gold) – Volunteering, Physical, Skills, Expedition and Residential. (for Gold only).

You'll find yourself helping people or the community, getting fitter, developing skills or going on an expedition. The best bit is you get to choose what you do and we help you complete ALL sections not just the expedition.

WHY DO YOUR DOFE?

Because, from the first day to the last it's a real adventure. Every section gives you something different – that's the fun of it!

You'll enjoy loads of new experiences, discover talents you never thought you had, challenge yourself and meet loads of people just like you. Plus you'll do things you love and get a kick out of. It's a real buzz!

Achieving an Award will give you skills, confidence and a view on life that everyone is looking for, from employers to colleges and universities. You're getting recognised for doing things you want to do (and may even be doing already).

You'll make a difference to other people's lives in your community, be fitter and healthier, make new friends and have memories to last you a lifetime and above all, it's a great laugh. The question should really be **why wouldn't you do your DofE?**

Beyond your academic achievements, universities want to see evidence of so called 'soft skills' that you have developed through extra-curricular activities, such as communication, commitment, leadership and team work. Your DofE Award is a fantastic way to demonstrate and evidence these skills in practice and therefore provides some useful material for your university personal statement or CV.

Interested in enrolling or would like more information please contact Kerry on, Tel: 01873 812177 or 07530137930 Email: crickhowellvolunteerbureau@gmail.com Facebook: Crickhowell Volunteer Bureau



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Brecon Women's Festival

Today, snowdrops, crocuses, pussy willows and catkins. Soon, primroses, anemone, celandine and speedwell. As sure as the world keeps turning and the sun keeps rising, the ground keeps giving. March brings us tulips, and no, it's no coincidence that this humble, coy, vibrant bloom is our now iconic Brecon Women's Festival logo – the Festival has long been a welcome harbinger of Spring in these parts.

Brecon Women's Festival to mark International Women's Day (taking place annually on March 8th) began with a single conversation between kindred souls back in late 2011 with the intention to 'put something on for a few days around International Women's Day in 2012'. Back then the planning and hosting of events, liaising with venues, designing, writing and producing the programme, managing the website, designing the logo, marketing events and fundraising – everything was undertaken, voluntarily, by a small group of local women. Retirement, relocation and other challenges has seen that group reduce in number but grow in determination and the commitment to continue to celebrate a huge global movement in this small Welsh market town. The Festival has continued to evolve and flourish and is now a firm feature on the cultural calendar of the area; it is largely curated by The Hours Cafe & Bookshop who have recently re-located to the Close at Brecon Cathedral.

Incredibly, this year marks eleven years of BWF – eleven years of showcasing and celebrating the remarkable women in our midst here in Brecon. As the world continues to adjust to the ravages and sadnesses of the global coronavirus pandemic and a cost

of living crisis most of us will never have seen before in our lifetimes, Brecon Women's Festival gives us a unique opportunity to celebrate the resilience, power and passions of women from every walk of life. This year the focus is very much on wellbeing, the natural world, creativity and art and the programme includes Art Classes, Workshops, Walks, Jazz, Theatre, Film and a whole array of other offerings. The Hours will host the Festival launch on Tuesday March 7th with the opening of 'Womenfolk' an exhibition of photographic portraits of local women by Nicky Bickerton and the brilliant Artisan Market on Saturday March 11th. Other highlights include exhibitions at Found and Ardent Galleries, a wellbeing day at Theatr Brycheiniog and the Tree-planting ceremony that closes the Festival each year.

This year's Festival takes place over the whole month of March with BWF's founding vision to celebrate the creativity, talents and achievements of women in and around Brecon with a programme of fascinating events that illuminate, inspire and entice still at its very heart. In short, it's a really lovely way to celebrate the global IWD event locally, while emphatically



The late, great and greatly missed sculptor Antonia Showers opened and exhibited at the 2017 Brecon Women's Festival

showcasing the very many brilliant, women here in our midst. Participating venues and friends of the festival include: The Hours Cafe & Bookshop; Found Gallery; The Muse; Ardent Gallery; Gate Gallery & Glassworks; Brecon Cathedral; The Woodland Trust; Brecon Jazz Club; Aberhonddu Angels WI; Y Gaer; Theatr Brycheiniog and Brecon Coliseum Cinema amongst others.

For further information about the Festival please contact The Hours at: hello@thehoursbrecon.co.uk. The full-length programme of events will be listed on the dedicated BWF page on thehoursbrecon.co.uk and social media mid February along with details on how to book (where needed).



Some of the original Festival organisers, Hilda Benham, Leigh Hendra, Nicky Bickerton & Karin Mear



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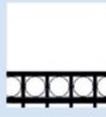
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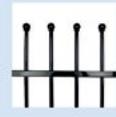
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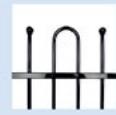
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EVENTS CALENDAR

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2023

IRISH CEILIDH 18/03/23

Lets celebrate *St. Patricks Day*
With an old skool evening
of dance & merriment!

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On Saturday March 18th we plan to celebrate St Patricks day with an old Skool evening of dance & Merriment!

And the evening is all thanks to the amazing singer/songwriter 'Dave Riley'! If you don't know Dave, let me tell you a bit about him! I met Dave when he first performed at Castell Roc as the singer with 'UK Guns n Roses' in 2016.

When first meeting the band, I couldn't believe that this quietly spoken, kind, gentle young man, turned into the most amazing 'Axel Rose' when on stage! The transformation was amazing and what a performance it was!

They have since played Castell Roc many times and each time the band put on an amazing performance and I personally struck up a lifelong friendship with them all.

Unfortunately, the boys decided to call it a day and go their separate ways, playing as 'UK Guns n Roses' for the very last time in August 2021 to a sold-out show.

Still being in touch with the boys, I went to see Dave perform solo in a local club, we had a good catch up, and he revealed to me that his one passion was Irish music, so I answered in saying "Lets put an Irsh night on then"... and here we are! Appearing at this event we have, Dave Riley joined by his brother Mark Riley, The Shaunessy Brothers, The Cider House Collective, solo artists on ocarina, penny whistle etc. Plus the amazing 'Horizon Dance Group'. Plus more to be confirmed!

So why not grab yourself a ticket, come along and have some fun!! And we promise to keep the Guinness flowing!!

2ND FEBRUARY**Book-ish Event
AN EVENING WITH LAURA PURCELL**

Join us in the Loft at Book-ish for an evening with Laura Purcell, discussing her new book *The Whispering Muse*. **The event will take place on Thursday 2nd February at 7.30 pm. Tickets will be £7 for entry only or £20 with a copy of the book.**
www.book-ish.co.uk

7TH FEBRUARY**Book-ish Event
AN EVENING WITH TOM
BULLOUGH**

Join us in the Loft at Book-ish for an evening with Tom Bullough, discussing his new book *Sarn Helen*. **The event is on Tuesday 7th February at 7.30 pm. Tickets cost £7 for entry only or £20 with a book**
www.book-ish.co.uk

7TH-11TH FEBRUARY**BRECKNOCK YFC JUNIOR
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Brecknock YFC return with their ever popular annual weeklong festival, which is sure to sell out! Clubs from across the country will compete for accolades such as Best Performer Under 16 Years Old, and Best Written Play. The ultimate winners will perform their pieces on the Gala Evening at the end of the week.

7pm, Theatr Brycheiniog, Brecon. For details and tickets visit www.brycheiniog.co.uk

21ST FEBRUARY**Book-ish event
AN EVENING WITH KATE HAMER**

Join us in the Loft at Book-ish for an evening with Kate Hamer, discussing her new book *The Lost Girls*. **Tickets cost £7 for entry only or £15 with a book. 7.30pm, Book-ish, 18 High St, Crickhowell**
www.book-ish.co.uk

21ST FEBRUARY**THE THREE BILLY GOATS GRUFF**

With catchy songs, funky dances to clap along to and a rapping Troll... Lost The Plot Theatrical are proud to present this interactive, family fun show! The perfect half-term treat for little ones and the big kids that bring them!

11.30am and 2pm, Theatr Brycheiniog, Brecon. For tickets and info visit www.brycheiniog.co.uk

22ND FEBRUARY**Book-ish event
AN EVENING WITH MARC
HAMER**

Join us for an evening with Marc Hamer discussing his new book *Spring Rain*

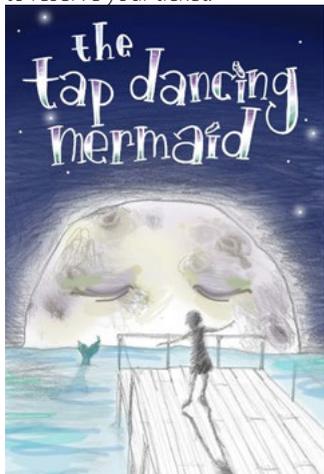
Tickets cost £7 for entry only or £20 with a book
7.30pm, Book-ish, 18 High St, Crickhowell
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24TH FEBRUARY**THE TAP DANCING MERMAID**

The "truly amazing one woman power house" Tessa Bide brings you her celebrated devised solo production, called "just everything a children's theatre experience should be" (Childplays). There are stunning puppets, original live music to sing along to and tap dancing that will make you want to stick 50ps to your shoes and join in! For everyone aged 3 to 133. Adult: £9 Children (up to 12yrs): £5 Family (2 adults & 2 children): £25

Continued overleaf

Call 01873 853167 or email melvillecamanager@gmail.com to reserve your ticket.



11am and 2pm, *Theatr Brycheiniog, Brecon*. For tickets and info visit www.brycheiniog.co.uk

3RD MARCH BAND OF THE PRINCE OF WALES ST DAVID'S DAY CONCERT



The Band of the Prince of Wales are excited to be celebrating St David's day with a feast of patriotic and heart-stirring Welsh music. Joining them live on stage will be St Nicholas House Choir (Christ College) and Brecon male voice choir. The audience will be treated to debut performances of compositions by some fantastic young Welsh composers.

7.30pm, *Theatr Brycheiniog, Brecon*. For tickets and info visit www.brycheiniog.co.uk

3RD MARCH WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

See our article on Page 19 for more information
2pm, *Kensington Baptist Church, Brecon*

4TH – 12TH MARCH CRICKHOWELL WALKING FESTIVAL



9 days of Guided walks in the beautiful Brecon Beacons National Park. Talks, quiz and audio-visual presentations in the evening also. Walks suitable for all ages and abilities. Booking open on the website- be quick, this is a popular event and walks fill up quickly! Visit www.crickhowellfestival.com for more info on individual events and see our article on Page 17

8TH MARCH Book-ish event AN EVENING WITH ANNE O'BRIEN



Join us for an evening with Anne O'Brien discussing her latest historical novel *A Marriage of*

Fortune.

Tickets cost £7 for entry only or £15 with a book
7pm, *Book-ish, 18 High St, Crickhowell*
www.book-ish.co.uk

11TH MARCH BRECON WOMEN'S FESTIVAL ARTISAN MARKET

The stalls will be a mix of inside the tithe barn, and out in the courtyard in gazebos. The café is open all day, and entry to the Market is free to the public!

Parking is available in the Cathedral car park as well as other car parks nearby, please check for the parking rate. Buses stop outside the venue. Or walk up the hill and arrive by foot! You'll find an amazing array of stands with authentic handmade arts and crafts.

10am-4pm, *The Hours Café & Bookshop, Brecon Cathedral grounds, Brecon*

LIST YOUR EVENT

Go to:

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

Llangattock Litter Pickers



@Llangattockpickers

Would you like to join this award-winning group of volunteers ?

Litter picking sessions run from 09-15 until about noon on a number of days each month . Can you spare the time to join us for at least one session ?

Llangattock Litter Pickers have been picking for 13 years. The group now litter picks on over 226 miles of roadside verges , volunteers walking 1886 miles in a year, on country lanes, canal tow paths and community areas in the Eastern end of the Brecon Beacons National Park and across four counties namely Powys, Blaenau Gwent, Torfaen and Monmouthshire. They meet up to 7 times a month normally on the 1st Saturday of the month, and conduct 6/7 weekday litter picks during the month. Last year over 33,400 cans / 13,260 plastic bottles / 6170 glass bottles were collected, sorted and sent for recycling .

Mostly covering Llangattock and Llangynidr in the Brecon Beacons National Park, the 16 volunteers meet 5 or 6 times a month.

Last year, the volunteers collected 309 bags of litter, weighing a total of 2849 kilograms, 68% of which was recycled.

Our national blight with litter is significant and education is not having the desired effect. Society is a lot different to 20 or 30 years ago and about three quarters of what we collect is plastic bottles, glass bottles cans and coffee cups.

"The days of the local authority doing this are over, they just don't have the resources anymore.

"We have very motivated volunteers and I get a kick out of going out with like-minded people with the collective opinion that if we don't do it, it won't happen."

The Llangattock Litter Pickers are looking for volunteers and can be contacted through their FaceBook page or Email llangattocklitterpickers@hotmail.com.

Barry Sandilands



Another Year of Progress for Crickhowell and District u3a



The anniversary picnic and the visit to Hellens Manor at Much Marcle

Landmark Trust property Llwyncelyn House, Cwmyoy. Trust.

A new Quizzers Group began evening meetings in January – an innovation begun by the Opera Group which now holds mass night-time screenings at the Clarence Hall. A group focussing on Vegan and Vegetarian Cookery also starts meetings soon.

Roger Bowen

Crickhowell and District University of the Third Age has continued to flourish despite the limitations imposed by the Covid pandemic and now boasts a membership of well over 400 which is remarkable for a rural community with a population of fewer than 3000 people.

Located in the south of the Brecon Beacons National Park but drawing in members from a wide area Crickhowell has embraced modern technology in the form of Zoom conferencing to allow people

unable to leave their homes to take an active part in their SIGs and in the monthly meetings in the Clarence Hall. This autumn we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the International u3a with a Picnic in the Park in Crickhowell Castle grounds.

The number of interest groups catering for specific subjects has continued to grow in 2022 and now stands at over thirty. A new Daytrippers Group provides entertaining visits to places such as the Penderyn Distillery, Hellens Manor, and most recently the impressive



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Crickhowell Walking Festival 2023

Saturday 4th – Sunday 12th March

Less than six weeks to go to the Festival and it's proving as popular as ever! Well over half the walk places are taken, and a quarter of the walks are fully booked – but there are still places available every day.

CFW 2023 will feature 82 walks throughout the Brecon Beacons National Park and beyond. The walks programme is backed up by informative map and navigation workshops and by evening events, with the headline talk by our annual charity Wales Air Ambulance, with their 3,500 critical care missions a year. Other fine talks include Mark Davis on Beacons cattle droving and a fascinating 50-year mountain man's retrospective from Crickhowell's own Kevin Walker.

As always, the heart of the Festival is out on the hills. Our walks vary from 3 to 16 miles and from town and riverside strolls to strenuous all-day expeditions in the Black Mountains and Brecon Beacons. Since 2020, we have also offered TMS, a challenge to climb Table Mountain up to five times in a day – only a few places left now!

The Festival benefits the CRiC charity (www.visitcrickhowell.wales) and Wales Air Ambulance. With over 42,000 missions flown to date, this vital 24/7 charity needs £8m per year and CFW 2023 will be playing its part. Add a donation to your booking at checkout, come to their talk and hear how lives are saved!

Hearty thanks go to the 100 volunteers who lead the walks,



give the talks and provide the backroom organisation and administration – also to the businesses who sponsor our walks and host our visitors.

Check it all out via the Festival website. Go now to www.crickhowellfestival.com to find out more and make your booking. Roll on 4th March, those hills will be waiting for you!

Sue Collins





Raspberry Viennese Cupcakes

These delicious morsels of loveliness are a great favourite at any time of the day in my household. As I always have the ingredients to hand in my store cupboard and they only take minutes to make, they are a really great treat to cook up when you have unexpected guests. You can use any flavoured jam of your choice, or even a little fruit compote.

Ingredients:

- 225g butter (softened)
- 75g sifted icing sugar
- 200g self raising flour
- 50g cornflour
- 1-2 tsp milk
- Raspberry Jam

Method

- 1** Preheat oven to 180C/160 Fan/gas 4.
- 2** Put cupcake cases into a 12 bun cake tin.
- 3** Place your very soft butter into a mixing bowl – the butter needs to be very soft as the mixture becomes very stiff when all the dry ingredients are added, which can make piping the mixture into the cupcake cases difficult.
- 4** Add the icing sugar and beat mixture until smooth.
- 5** Stir in the flour and cornflour, mixing until well combined. If you feel the mixture is too stiff to pipe, add 1-2 tsp of milk to slightly loosen it.
- 6** Spoon mixture into piping bag fitted with a star nozzle and, in a circular motion, pipe into the cupcake cases.
- 7** Bake for 15-20 minutes until slightly golden and set.
- 8** Cool on a wire rack. Then spoon a teaspoon of raspberry jam onto the centre of each case and dust lightly with icing sugar

Weather Outlook: February

by Jonathan Powell

Following on from a January which saw some seasonally cold weather but will be remembered for flooding across the region, February is expected to be another wet month. Whereas there will be drier and brighter spells of weather with accompanying sunshine by day and frosty conditions by night, the likelihood of any snow causing a sustained period of disruption seems remote, with the balance firmly with the rain staying as rain. Granted, at higher levels, a sleet/snow mix will show its hand, but generally at lower levels, the spectre of flooding would seem to be as present as it was in the opening month of the year. A wetter than average February, with temperatures above the average for the month.



World Day of Prayer

A women led, global, ecumenical movement

"I HAVE HEARD ABOUT YOUR FAITH"

Our sisters in Taiwan are sending us blessings with the service they have prepared for World Day of Prayer 2023.

Taiwan is an island rich in natural resources and culturally diverse. The women of Taiwan share the issues faced geographically, politically and socially and also their hopes for the future. Let us join with them as we give thanks for the beautiful island and people of Taiwan and encourage one another in our faith just as Apostle Paul did in his letters.

World Day of Prayer is an international, inter-church organisation which enables us to hear the thoughts of women from all parts of the world: their hopes, concerns and prayers. The preparation for the day is vast. An international committee is based in New York and there are national committees in each participating

country. Regional conferences meet to consider the service and then local groups make their plans. Finally, at a church near you on Friday March 3 2023 people will gather to celebrate the service prepared by the women of Taiwan.

The Day of Prayer is celebrated in over 120 countries. It begins in Samoa and prayer in native languages travels throughout the world --- through Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Europe and the Americas before finishing in American Samoa some 38 hours later.

Friday 3rd March 2023 2.00pm
at Kensington Baptist Church,
Brecon

For further information and resources, together with details of services in your area, see the WDP website: www.dp.org.uk

Barbara Tonkin





Love

Your task is not to seek for love,
but merely to seek and find all the
barriers within yourself that you
have built against it. ~ Rumi

Powys Later Life MOT



Age Cymru Powys staff with Mike, a client who has been helped by Age Cymru Powys

New innovative service developed in Powys for older people: 'Later Life MOT'

Age Cymru Powys is supporting the community thanks to National Lottery funding of £99,760 to deliver Later Life MOTs in Powys for people aged 65+. Targeted at the most deprived, vulnerable, and frail, the charity's staff and volunteers will be working with older people to maximise their income, health, and wellbeing.

The Later Life MOT is a new, innovative concept developed by Age Cymru Powys in response to older people's needs and requests, with the potential to revolutionise future planning for getting older.

Age Cymru Powys' trusted reputation means older people go to them for help, often in times of crisis. 79% of people who

approached the charity last year were experiencing a significant life event.

Later Life MOTs will support older people with issues that affect their quality of life, including Finances, Health & Wellbeing, Home, Social Connections, and Future Planning; with the aim of helping older people to make the most of later life.

Elwyn, 83, came up with the name 'Later Life MOT' after being helped by Age Cymru Powys:

"I feel like I've had the full MOT with you today. You've made me realise there's lots of things we can do to make life better for me and my wife, on all kinds of matters due to getting older."

Age Cymru Powys is based in Powys, Mid Wales, and over the next two years this funding will help the community to adapt,

recover and thrive, making an incredible difference to the charity's work and those that rely upon it. Last year Age Cymru Powys secured over £1million of unclaimed benefits payments for older Powys residents.

Gail Colbridge, Chief Officer at Age Cymru Powys, said:

"We are extremely excited to be awarded this grant by The National Lottery Community Fund. This funding will help us respond to the needs of older people here in Powys to combat the Cost-of-Living Crisis and tackle the challenges older people face, often alone. We cannot wait to start our Age UK Later Life MOT project. Thank you, National Lottery players for helping to make a massive difference to older people here in Powys."

Mike, who has been helped by Age Cymru Powys, said:

"I'm so glad that Age Cymru Powys have received this funding. They have helped me so much; they've saved my life, all of the staff and volunteers do an amazing job and work so hard. I'm pleased that they can help more older people like me".

Later Life MOTs are open to all Powys residents aged 65+. If you would like to book your MOT, or if you'd like to help Age Cymru Powys reach out to more older people across Powys, then please do get in touch:

Age Cymru Powys, Old Warehouse, Parker's Lane, Newtown, Powys SY16 2LT

Call: 01686 623707

Email: enquiries@acpowys.org.uk
Website: www.agecymru.org.uk/powys. Facebook: www.facebook.com/agecymrupowys

Twitter: [https://twitter.com/](https://twitter.com/Agecymrupowys)

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Abergavenny Writing Festival invites young people to express themselves



The presentation at last year's Youth Writing Competition where the Mayor presented the winners with their certificates

The Abergavenny Writing Festival will return from the 21st to the 22nd April in 2023 at The Kings Arms, The Melville Centre for the Arts and other pop-up venues.

The Abergavenny Writing Festival is about encouraging everyone to write and express themselves. Whether for mental health and wellbeing, as a way of making a living, to bring about change, to keep a record or simply for pleasure.

There will be two days packed with events for all ages and abilities. Friday the 21st will be dedicated to talks and workshops for improving writing skills and on Friday evening there will be a hybrid (online and in person) open-mic. On Saturday the 22nd there will be a full day of inspiring sessions for adults based around writing for wellbeing and fun. Running concurrently on Saturday there will be a full day of workshops and activities for young people.

And for the fourth year running the Festival will be running its Youth Writing Competition; appealing to young people to

express themselves. The prize for the winning young writers will be mentoring sessions with some of Wales's most exciting and inspiring writing talent. The competition is free to enter and open to all from school Years 3 to 13. This year the theme is "Express Yourself" and entries are welcomed in Welsh or English and in any written form: from a poem to an article, a speech, a story or a descriptive piece of writing. The deadline for entries is Friday 17th February. There will be a presentation for the winners at The Melville Centre during the Abergavenny

Writing Festival on Saturday 22nd April, followed by the mentoring sessions.

There is a link to enter on www.abergavennywritingfestival.com and please get in touch with any queries by emailing entries@abergavennywritingfestival.com

The Abergavenny Writing Festival is supported by Arts Council Wales, Abergavenny Town Council, Christie Residential, the Abergavenny Rotary Club and Ogi's Cefnogi Community Fund.

Lucie Parkin



Youth writing mentors, (left to right) Connor Allen, Jonathan Edwards and Rufus Mufasa

The hidden gift



of down time

All of us, from time to time, are affected by low moods, but when sadness, apathy and hopelessness become all-pervasive, we call this depression. If you've suffered or been given this diagnosis, then read on, as I want to explore with you the purpose behind it.

"Purpose?!" I hear you splutter, as well you may, if like me you were taught that it's an illness – an affliction we could do without.

But what if depression doesn't signify that there's anything wrong? What if it's evidence of the human operating system working exactly as it should? Let's slow down together and just imagine...

Imagine our experience of life boiled down to a series of moments, in each of which we are either at peace with life, or struggling with it; one, or the other.

When at peace, we are fully present; we have clarity of thought and everything flows nicely: challenges arise, but we deal with them with common sense; we feel love and connection with our fellow humans, forgiving them their faults, just as we forgive ourselves our own. We don't take things too seriously, or personally. In this state, you could imagine we're at one with life, resting naturally in our true nature.

When struggling, it's the

opposite: we're distracted by everything the mind says; caught up in judgemental thinking, about ourselves and others; we feel stuck and struggle with problems. It seems like there's a lot at stake all the time and we feel separate from life – like we somehow don't fit in.

Now imagine that the design of this system is so perfect, there's a failsafe mechanism built in that alerts us immediately we become distracted from the natural, peaceful state. "Ding!" it rings, rousing us from our rumination. We grin sheepishly, realise we're thinking ourselves away from our true nature and relax back into the here and now of life's flow, grateful that we noticed.

Occasionally, we fail to heed the alert and innocently go deeper into our thinking, but it's ok because the system's perfect and the alarm gets louder—"Ding! DING!"—and if we continue to ignore it, louder still: "DING-DING-DING!!!"

Imagine there's only ever this one thing going on—we're either at peace, or we're distracted from it—and the alert correspondingly has one job, that it does flawlessly: tells us how on- or off-track we are, so we can come back home. And for as long as we continue to look in the wrong place for our sense of peace, it will never stop, because it's there to protect us from harm.

Wouldn't that be amazing?

We all have such an alert, and it is our feelings. They are a failsafe mechanism built to protect us from the harm of our own thinking, and they too will get louder, the deeper we go. At their gentlest you'll maybe feel disquiet, but ignored they will escalate to sadness, depression, despair and yes, even to suicidal ideation; all examples of everything working exactly as it should.

When we see that the psychological system is always striving to rebalance itself, then depression starts to make sense as something pointing to a solution that is a lot closer than we think... one that is so simple, and so obvious, that we failed to notice it.

So if you're suffering, please take hope from these words. There's nothing wrong with you. It's just life's built-in alert system, calling you back to your true nature; to the only place you can experience the peace of mind you seek: Now.



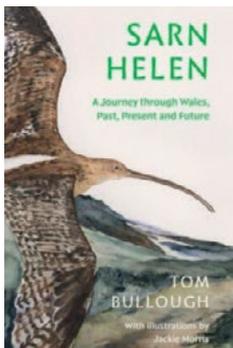
Dr Giles P Croft
gilescroft.com
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If you suffer from depression and are looking for a way back to your old self, without the need for medication or having to rake over the past, then get in touch today at <https://gilescroft.com/contact/> – you have every reason to be hopeful.

{BOOK•ISH}

BOOKS, CONVERSATION & MORE

Author
Events
February

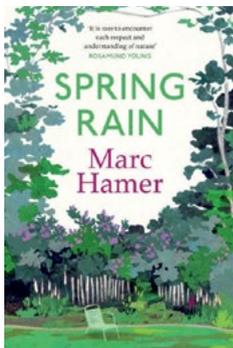
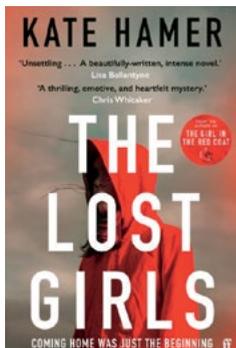


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Books

With Valentine's Day just around the corner, the Booksellers at Book-ish have put their heads together to come up with a list of book recommendations inspired by the theme of love in all its colourful, varying and sometimes unexpected forms.

Spring Rain

Marc Hamer

£16.99



As a young boy in a violent home, Marc found refuge in his small back garden. Here he kindled a lifelong love of nature and learning by observing the plants

and insects in his private kingdom and reading the old encyclopedias he found in the shed.

Join us for an evening with Marc Hamer on Wednesday 22nd February at 7.30pm.

Boy Friends

Michael Pedersen

£14.99



In 2018 poet and author Michael Pedersen lost a cherished friend, Scott Hutchison, soon after their collective voyage into the landscape of the Scottish Highlands.

Just weeks later, Michael began to write to him. As he confronts the bewildering process of grief, what starts as a love letter to one magical, coruscating human soon becomes a paean to all the gorgeous male friendships that have transformed his life.

The Long Field

Pamela Petro

£20



The Long Field burrows deep into the Welsh countryside to tell how this small country became a big part of an American writer's life. Petro, author

of Travels in an Old Tongue, twines her story around that of Wales by viewing both through the lens of hiraeth, a quintessential Welsh word famously hard to translate. It literally means "long field," but is also more than the English approximation of "homesickness." It's a name for the bone-deep longing felt for someone or something--a home, culture, language, a younger self--that you've lost or left behind.

Join us for an evening with Pamela Petro on Tuesday 14th March at 7.30pm.

The Things We Do To Our Friends

Heather Darwent

£14.99



Clare arrives at the University of Edinburgh with a secret. This is her chance for a blank slate - to finally become who she was meant to be. And then she meets Tabitha.

With themes of love and dark revenge, an intoxicating feminist page-turner, this novel will take you on a journey from Edinburgh's dazzling spires to the dripping staircases and dark alleyways of its underbelly.

Drift

Caryl Lewis

£14.99



A beautifully realised modern love story moving between the Welsh coast and Syria, Lewis' meditation on connection, identity and the power of the sea revolves around two lost souls trying to make sense of the world they find themselves in.

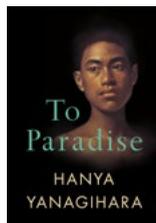
Join us for an evening with Caryl Lewis on Monday 27th March at 7.30pm.

To Paradise

Hanya Yanagihara

Yanagihara

£9.99



Traversing three centuries and three alternative versions of the American experiment, the author of A Little Life returns with a spellbinding chronicle of love, the meaning of family and the excruciating cost of unattainable dreams. To Paradise is a fin de siecle novel of marvellous literary effect, but above all it is a work of emotional genius. The great power of this remarkable novel is driven by Yanagihara's understanding of the aching desire to protect those we love - partners, lovers, children, friends, family and even our fellow citizens - and the pain that ensues when we cannot.

For tickets to Book-ish events, visit www.book-ish.co.uk

Book-ish
18 High Street, Crickhowell,
Powys. NP8 1BD
Tel: 01873 811256
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Volunteers - a Community Heartbeat



Ann Teasdale, Gill Axford, Jill Pugh and Chris Watson

Local community members have a deep and intimate knowledge of their local area, its history, culture and people. It is this local knowledge and love of the area that organisations and charities such as CRiC, in the centre of Crickhowell, have come to rely on so much. The small staff team is supported by volunteers who offer their skills and knowledge to help

staff the Centre, welcome and advise visitors and help with everything from photocopying to promoting the region's art in the Oriol CRiC Gallery. The retail area is a treasure trove of gifts, books, Welsh products and cards for every occasion.

Local walking knowledge by many of the volunteers is invaluable. Bill Chase is part of the organising team behind the hugely successful Crickhowell Walking Festival

(www.crickhowellfestival.com) which will take place from 4 – 12 March 2023.

CRiC is also gearing itself up for the annual Open Studios weekend during the Spring Bank Holiday Weekend which also incorporates an Open Art Competition. Artists who are interested in entering are invited to email gallery@visitcrickhowell.wales for further details.

In this spirit of generosity many of the faces seen volunteering at CRiC can be seen volunteering in local charity shops or for organisations such as Dial-a-Ride. Becoming involved in volunteering brings with it the

added bonus of meeting people and socialising with like minded people. CRiC appreciates the contribution of volunteers to its sustainability and always welcomes people who would like to join the volunteer team.

Crickhowell Resource & Information Centre, Beaufort Street, Crickhowell NP8 1BN Tel 01873 811970

www.visitcrickhowell.wales
gallery@visitcrickhowell.wales

Suzette Pratton



Helen Burns, Angie Dix, Bridget Elwin and Jane Moseley



Bill Chase and Jeff Howe



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Image from Daniel Mackie cards

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Here at the Focus, we believe in Positive News! We understand that the world can be a tricky, daunting and scary place to navigate, often with depressing news splashed across our screens on a daily basis.

The Focus aims to provide our readers with an upbeat and positive reading experience. We want to fill our pages with lively editorial about local news and articles of community interest and intrigue!

Do you have something in mind that you'd like to share with our estimated 40,000 monthly readers?

Read our submissions guidelines below and find out how to go about doing so.

Will I be charged?

We are frequently asked this question, so it's a valid one. If you are sharing an article that in some way promotes a self-employed, sole trader, limited company or partnership then there will be a charge involved. Please look at our advertising prices to find out what

type of advertising option will suit you best.

How will I know if you are going to include it or not?

Editorial decisions regarding inclusion into the magazine depends on a number of varying factors. We can't give you a firm 'yes' or 'no' as to whether it will definitely appear in print or not. If you want inclusion absolutely guaranteed, there is a cost involved. If, for whatever reason we cannot include your article in our print magazine, we may be able to publish it on our website.

How long should I make my article?

No longer than 500 words. This will fit into a full page. It may well be if we choose to print your article but we are tight for space, that we will ask you to reduce the word count so that we can fit it into the space available to us.

What else do I need to include?

Please include the name of the person or organisation we are to credit for editorial contribution. We

would also love for you to include an image to go with the article. Please send this as a high-resolution jpeg attachment to your email. It should be free of copyright so that it can be reproduced. Focus Magazines accepts no liability for this.

Can I see the article before it goes to press?

We do not send proof layouts provided on a complimentary basis ahead of going to press.

Can I make changes to the article?

Minor editorial changes can be made up to and including our copy deadline date.

When do I need to send it to you by?

15th of the month, please

Can I submit an article regularly?

We try to give everyone a fair opportunity to have editorial submissions included in the magazines where possible. If you require content to be included on a regular basis, please speak to us about how this might be possible ahead of making your submission.

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