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## Dear Readers,



I can't tell you how happy I am that March is upon us. For one thing my birthday falls in March. It happens to fall on the 15th which is also known at the Ides of March – the date on which Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44BC. Shakespeare used the

phrase 'Beware the Ides of March' as a foreshadowing of ill fortune for Caesar and is a phrase my father keenly adopted in reference to anything happening on 15th as being pretty bad luck! He says it with irony of course (or at least I hope!).

I also like March because of Mother's Day (double present action!) and it's a chance for us to celebrate the important mother figures in our lives, whether they are still with us or not. It can be a tricky time for many – I hope it will be OK for you. We have a special Mother's Day gift edit on pages 16-17 to inspire you if you are gift seeking. There are some really cool suggestions!

Lots of local news and events to get your teeth into too.

I really hope you enjoy this month's read!

Hannah

**Publisher:** Focus Magazines Ltd

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Dr Giles P Croft, Duncan Foulke, Jonathan Powell, Powys Countryside Services, Powys NGS, Suzette Pratton, Dave Thomas

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# New Members for Crickhowell Rotary Club



LEFT TO RIGHT: Kerry Crosfield, President Kevin Phillips and Nikki Welton-Wall

**P**osing for a photo, President Mr Kevin Phillips welcomes Kerry Crosfield & Nikki Welton-Wall to the Crickhowell Rotary Club. This represents an historic moment for the club. Kerry and Nikki are formally the first female members in the club's history.

Commenting, Club President Kevin said "this is a welcome development in the life of our club and I am confident both Kerry and Nikki will bring a new dimension and energy to the club's activities. He added "historically the club has enjoyed the whole hearted support of the Rotary Ladies Group and this will continue unchanged. The Club is indebted to them for the work they have done and continue to do for The Crickhowell Rotary Club"

Speaking for herself, Kerry said "I joined the Rotary because I feel I can help change the perspective that the Rotary Club is just for men and encourage other women to come forward. I know through partnership working for many years with the Crickhowell Rotary Club just how much good the club does for the Community. I believe I can be an asset to an already great team, continuing to work on with a wide range of community initiatives."

Nikki said "Crickhowell is very close to my heart as I live, work and have my family in the local area. Joining The Rotary means I am able to be part of a team who has community and supporting others as it's core values. Just look at the examples of prompt actions taken the club for Ukraine in March 2022 and The Earthquake Appeal on Saturday 11th February 2023"

Both Kerry and Nikki work in The Crickhowell Volunteer Bureau and have clear insight into the local needs of The Crickhowell community.

Concluding President Kevin said "our new members are emblematic of the member profile the Rotary organisation needs to renew itself and maintain adequate capacity to deliver local, national and International campaigns".

Continuing he said "I believe that this change will add to the social dynamism and overall enjoyment of club life for all club members including wives and partners".

He also added that he felt that the club was clearly living up to the organisations principal motto of 'Service Before Self'. New members enable our club to retain and build on one of the other defining lines associated with the Rotary Organisation Internationally, that of being: 'People of Action'

Rotary is an organisation with local national and international networks and provides endless opportunities to build for a better future and in the process provides members with the many personal development and social opportunities only usually found in larger organisations.

If readers are interested in being a part of the 'Rotary Scene' in Crickhowell please contact

President Kevin Phillips directly on: 01873 812895 or by email: [kevinphillip47@gmail.com](mailto:kevinphillip47@gmail.com)

Dave Thomas  
Crickhowell Rotary Club



# #LovePowysCanals Photo Competition

**K**een photographers are being invited to share their favourite snaps of Powys canals as part of the new #LovePowysCanals photography competition launched by the Canals, Communities and Wellbeing project.

Open to both residents and visitors, the competition aims to celebrate the beauty of the Montgomery and Monmouthshire and Brecon Canals and encourage people to get out, explore and enjoy the waterways.

The Canals, Communities and Wellbeing project is focusing on increasing opportunities for public access, recreation, rural active travel and supporting enhanced wellbeing within a 5km corridor of both canals running through the county. Ultimately, the project partners are working together on a host of activities that will make the canals more accessible to all.

"We are extremely lucky here is Powys to have two historically important and beautiful canals running through our county," explains Cllr Jackie Charlton, Cabinet Member for a Greener Powys. "Not only do they play a crucial role in creating incredible nature-rich habitats for all kinds of wildlife, but they also provide a unique place for residents and visitors to enjoy."

"What better way to celebrate these remarkable waterways than choosing our favourite photos to enter into the #LovePowysCanals photography competition. Not only will participants get the pleasure of sharing their memories with others, but they could be in with a chance of winning some great prizes too."

The competition is open to everyone, so why not dig out your best shot, or grab your camera and go exploring. There are four themes and two age categories, in which people can submit their photos. Two winning photos from each theme will

be selected in April 2023 with winners receiving a prize from one of the participating partners. Remember to use the hashtag #LovePowysCanals with any of your photos online.

Deadline for entries is 29 March 2023.

#### Themes:

- Our Lovely Waterways
- Nature on the Canal
- Canals in the Seasons
- Canals in motion

#### Submission Guidelines:

- Must be taken along the Montgomeryshire or Monmouthshire/Brecon Canal
- Categories: Under 16 and Adults
- Submit up to 5 photos, per theme
- JPG Photo size <5mb
- We are unable to accept photos with people or children in.

Download an entry form from the Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/powys.countryside>

Powys Countryside Services



## Powys Gardens News and Openings for Charity

**A**fter all the rain and snow, has Spring arrived? Snowdrops, daffodils and lambs are the tell-tale signs but we appear to be in a changing world in the way we garden, the plants we use and how we conserve water are all important not only locally but globally too.

The first of our online talks was with Jackie Harris of the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) and Lucy Redman from Beth Chatto Gardens discussed water security and drought resistant planting. But the highlight for us in Powys will be Gardening in the Dolfor Hills by Wolfgang Schaefer on Tuesday 7th March at 7pm. Hear from Wolfgang the story of how his garden was created and how it has changed over the 35 years he and Kingsley have been at Cwm-Weeg, Dolfor Newtown. To book visit [ngs.org.uk/shop](http://ngs.org.uk/shop) where you can listen to recordings of previous talks. This garden will open for the National Garden Scheme on 16 July.

If you listened to BBC Radio Wales' Country Focus at the end of January, or repeated early February, there was an educational visit to the poison garden of Bryngwyn Hall, Powys. The grade II\* listed 9 acre garden with 60 acres parkland design inspired by William Emes is open for the National Garden Scheme on Sunday 26 March (11am -4pm). For more information on this garden at Bwlch-y-Cibau, Llanfyllin SY22 5LJ visit [findagarden.ngs.org.uk](http://findagarden.ngs.org.uk) You have till the end of February to listen again to the Country Focus programme on BBC Sounds [www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001hlng](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m001hlng)

A new opening to look forward to, 30th April and 1st May Garregllwyd, Nantmel, Rhayader, LD6 5PE. This 3 acre landscaped garden at 1000 feet has

stunning panoramic views of mid Wales. This garden is designed to cope with exposed altitude with minimal maintenance and to encourage wildlife. Enjoy daffodils, bluebells and rhododendrons from a variety of seating areas to enjoy the ever changing weather conditions.

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INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S 'DAY'  
MARCH JAZZ EVENTS

### RACHEL STARRITT TRIO

FRIDAY, 10TH MARCH 7:30pm  
@THE MUSE (*open from 7pm*)

Jazz wonder-girl, Rachel Starritt, on piano,  
Ashley-john Long on bass and Liz Exell on drums.  
Plus a short pre-interval talk from Jazz Heritage  
Wales in support of Brecon Women's Festival &  
International Women's Week

TICKETS £12 advance/£14 door/£7 youth

### SHIRLEY SMART TRIO

*World Jazz Special*

SUNDAY, 19TH MARCH 7:30pm  
@THE MUSE (*open from 7pm*)

Shirley Smart: cello, John Crawford: piano  
Demi Garcia Sabat: drums. This very special  
event in Brecon is supported with grateful thanks to  
the ACW Night Out / Noson Allan Scheme.

TICKETS £15 advance/£17 door/£8 youth



For Tickets: [www.breconjazz.org](http://www.breconjazz.org)

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THE DRILL HALL

# EVENTS CALENDAR MARCH 2023

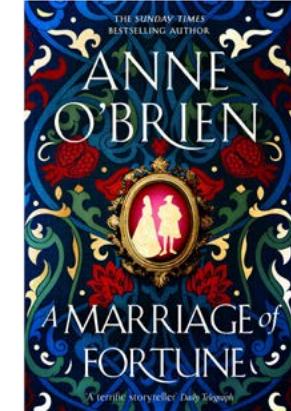
4TH-12TH MARCH  
CRICKHOWELL WALKING FESTIVAL



Time to shrug off those winter blues and get back out into our beautiful mountains and valleys! Nine 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.

Visit [www.crickhowellfestival.com](http://www.crickhowellfestival.com)

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](http://www.book-ish.co.uk)

10TH MARCH

Brecon Jazz Club for Brecon Women's Festival:  
RACHEL STARRITT TRIO



Jazz wonder-girl from Bridgend, Rachel Starritt (above) on piano - such a swinging player even though her main training has been in classical repertoire - she has put together a real audience-pleasing setlist. Completing the Trio are jazz club favourites, Ashley-john Long on double bass and Liz Exell on drums. As if this wasn't enough excitement for one evening, our friends from Jazz Heritage Wales will be giving a short pre-interval talk on some of the gems of their jazz archive collection - all part of our support for Brecon Women's Festival & International Women's Week 2023

7.30pm, The Muse, Glamorgan St, Brecon. Tickets £12 in advance, £14 on the door, £7 young person

# IMPROVING OUR RIVER QUALITY

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](http://dwrcymru.com/riverwaterquality)



## GWELLA ANSAWDD EIN HAFONYDD



Fel cwmni, rydym yn cymryd ein cyfrifoldebau i ddiogelu'r omgylchedd o ddifrif. 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 ffosffadau 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, draenau 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 drafferth dros ben i bawb. Fodd bynnag, rydyn ni'n deall bod hwn yn fater pwysig i drigolion lleol, ac rydyn ni wedi ymrwymo i chwarae ein rhan i leihau ein heffaith ar afon Wysg.

I ddorganfod mwy am yr hyn rydym yn ei wneud i helpu gwella ansawdd dŵr afonydd, ewch i [dwrcymru.com/riverwaterquality](http://dwrcymru.com/riverwaterquality)



### 11TH MARCH

#### Brecon Women's Festival: ARTISAN MARKET

Arts, Crafts, Food, Handmade Gifts

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

### 14TH MARCH

#### Book-ish Author Event: PAMELA PETRO – THE LONG FIELD



Ticket & Book £15, Ticket only £7,

7:30pm, 18 High St, Crickhowell

[www.book-ish.co.uk/events](http://www.book-ish.co.uk/events) or 01873 811256

### 19TH MARCH

#### Brecon Jazz for Brecon Women's Festival: SHIRLEY SMART TRIO



Trailblazing musician Shirley Smart has taught & worked with colleagues in & from Palestine, Israel, North Africa, Middle East, and her thrilling music reflects it all. Played with fire and virtuosity, this very special event in Brecon is supported with grateful thanks to the ACW Night Out / Noson Allan Scheme.

TICKETS £15 advance / £17 on the door / £8 youth 7pm, *The Muse, Glamorgan St Brecon*. See Page 10 for more info

### 20TH MARCH

#### Book-ish Author Event: CHRIS LLOYD – PARIS REQUIEM

Ticket & Book £20, Ticket only £7,

7:30pm, 18 High St, Crickhowell

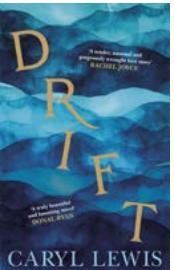
[www.book-ish.co.uk/events](http://www.book-ish.co.uk/events) or 01873 811256

### 26TH MARCH

#### BLACK MOUNTAIN JAZZ SESSION

Claire Roberts, Carmen McCrae Remembered 7pm, *Melville Centre, Penypound*

[www.melvillecentre.org.uk](http://www.melvillecentre.org.uk)



### 27TH MARCH

#### Book-ish Author Event: CARYL LEWIS – DRIFT

Ticket & Book £15, Ticket only £7, 7:30pm, 18 High St, Crickhowell

[www.book-ish.co.uk/events](http://www.book-ish.co.uk/events) or 01873 811256

## LIST YOUR EVENT

Go to:

[thefocus.wales/calendar/](http://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

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# Reach your potential at Hereford Sixth Form College



Hereford Sixth Form College is one of the most successful sixth forms in the country and has been graded Outstanding in all aspects of its work by Ofsted. With an extensive range of academic and vocational courses on offer, the college has something to suit most students. In 2022, the college was awarded "School of the year" at the Student Social Mobility Awards, recognising a school or college that has made outstanding efforts to boost the career aspirations of students.

The number of students gaining A\*, A or B grades is above the national average and the proportion of successful applications to Oxford or Cambridge is twice that of schools and colleges nationally. This year 23 students have obtained offers for Oxbridge places, including students from Crickhowell High School and King Henry VIII School in Abergavenny.

With excellent transport links and subsidised travel for all students, the College welcomes learners to its central Hereford city location from surrounding counties, including Mid and South Wales, Shropshire, Gloucestershire, and Worcestershire.



The college offers excellent support and guidance, with focus on both personal and academic development. Students also benefit from extensive enrichment activities, such as Theatrical Arts, Sports, Student-led Societies, Debating, Guest Speakers plus much more. A thriving student led Council is elected each year, working to convey the student voice, and raising funds for charities.



Hereford Sixth Form College is renowned for excellent sporting capabilities, with sports academies in Rugby, Netball, Hockey, Football and Basketball competing on the regional, national, and international stages. An Elite Athlete support programme is also in place to support gifted athletes to obtain academic qualifications alongside training and development in their field of sport.

Several open events are held each year for students and families to explore the campus, discover new subjects and talk to current students. More information, including dates of upcoming open events can be found at:

[www.hereford.ac.uk](http://www.hereford.ac.uk) and on social media @herefordsfc



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QUARTER PAGE	£65	£50	£42
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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

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# Weather Outlook

by Jonathan Powell



The new season gradually takes hold as we move out of another winter which on balance has proved relatively tame, with little in the way of snowfall but as a reminder that it was winter, some raw temperatures and sharp frost activity. As March rolls in, a rather indifferent month to be expected with a veritable mix of conditions across the month, and with one eye on the clocks going forward, increasing hours of daylight with summer in the distance. Therefore spells of wind and rain tempered by drier, brighter, and at times sunnier weather, which out of any wind, will afford some tepid warmth. Whereas there may well be some frost activity, it looks chiefly limited and not severe in nature. Rainfall will be around the average for March with temperatures on or above the average.

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# Mothering Sunday Simnel Cake

Simnel cake is traditionally made at Easter, however, I discovered that Mothering Sunday was also known as Simnel Sunday based on the tradition of making a marzipan-topped fruit cake on this day. The cake is decorated with 11 marzipan balls on the top representing the 11

apostles, excluding Judas, and servant girls originally gave it to their mothers on Mothering Sunday when they were given a day off to visit their family. This is a delicious recipe producing a tasty, moist cake. Although I have included instructions for making your own marzipan, shop bought also works well.

## Marzipan Ingredients

- 225g icing sugar, plus extra for rolling
- 175g caster sugar
- 350g ground almonds
- 2 large eggs, beaten
- ½ tsp almond extract
- 1 tsp fresh lemon juice

If using pre-made marzipan you will require two packs gently moulded together.

## Marzipan Method

Sift the icing sugar into a large bowl, stir in the caster sugar and almonds. Add the beaten eggs, almond essence and lemon juice and stir with a wooden spoon until the mixture starts to come together. Using your hands continue combining the mixture together until it becomes a stiff paste.

Dust the work surface with icing

sugar and gently knead the marzipan mixture for a couple of minutes until it is smooth. Place in a bowl and cover with cling film and leave to stand for 1-2 hours, allowing the almonds to swell and absorb the moisture.

Divide the marzipan into 3 equal sized balls.

Balls 1 & 2 – On parchment paper draw 2 circle templates about 2cm

larger than the cake tin. Dust work surface with icing sugar and roll marzipan about 5mm thick. Using one of the templates cut out a circle and leave to rest on the parchment template. Repeat – you will have two marzipan circles.

Ball 3 – Make 11 small balls to represent the 11 apostles

## Fruit cake ingredients

- 20cm greased loose based deep round cake tin (lined with parchment paper)
- 500g mixed fruit
- 100g glace cherries (halved)
- Juice and grated zest of 1 medium orange
- Juice and grated zest of 1 lemon
- 225g self raising flour
- 2 tsp mixed spice
- 3 large eggs, beaten
- 175g softened butter
- 175g light muscavado sugar
- 2 tbsp warmed apricot jam

## Fruit Cake Method

Oven 170C/150F/Gas 3

Place the mixed fruit, glace cherries, orange and lemon juice in a saucepan and bring to a simmer, stirring until the liquid disappears. Tip fruit onto a plate to cool.

Beat the butter and sugar together in a food mixer until light and fluffy.

Gradually beat in the eggs, adding a little flour if the mixture begins to curdle.

Add the flour and mixed spice and stir until well incorporated.

Add the cooled mixed fruit, grated orange and lemon zest and mix well.

Spoon half of the mixture into the prepared tin.

Place one of the marzipan circles on top of the cake mixture – don't worry if it tears just gently squeeze it back together.

Spoon the rest of the cake mixture on top of the marzipan.

Bake the cake for 1hr 30 mins or until well risen, firm and golden brown.

If unsure, test by inserting a skewer which should come out clean. If it doesn't, continue cooking for a little longer. You may wish to cover the cake loosely with foil if the top is beginning to brown too much. Leave to cool.

To assemble the cake brush the top with the warmed apricot jam, place the second circle of marzipan on the top and crimp the edges, score a criss-cross pattern across the top of the cake and then place the 11 marzipan balls around the edge, brush a little jam on each so they stick.

If you have a blowtorch gently toast the top of the cake OR place under a preheated hot grill about 15-20 cm from the element, until it is slightly toasted. Watch carefully!

Decorate with a ribbon if desired.



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# Local Junior Chef Stephanie Wins Title



**A** young chef from Crickhowell has cooked her way to the prestigious Junior Chef of Wales title after a closely contested final at the Welsh International Culinary Championships (WICC) last month.

Stephanie Belcher, who we featured in the January edition of the Focus, is a 21-year-old chef de partie working at Coast Restaurant, Saundersfoot. She edged out four other chefs to take the coveted trophy after less than two weeks to prepare for the final.

She had been due to compete in a team of two at the Global Pastry Chef Challenge North Europe heat in Italy this week before a late withdrawal of Wales' entry. She then had to switch her focus to the Junior Chef of Wales final.

She and the other finalists were given three hours to cook a three-course dinner for four people, using their own creative menu and mostly Welsh ingredients.

Stephanie's commis chef in the final was Junior Culinary Team Wales teammate Jay Rees, a degree student at Grŵp Llandrillo Menai.

Jay won the award for best commis in both the National and Junior Chef of Wales competitions.

She cooked a menu comprising a starter of scallop, watercress and shrimp with a selection of foraged Welsh sea herbs. Main course was Welsh Beef, celeriac, cavalo nero and local vegetables from Saundersfoot. Dessert was pear caraibe, Valrhona chocolate, almond financier, lapsang souchong espuma, pickled pear and raspberry.

She now qualifies for the semi-finals of the Young National Chef of the Year contest, organised by the Craft Guild of Chefs and will receive support from the Junior Culinary Team Wales, of which she is a member, a set of engraved knives from Friedr Dick and products worth £100 from Churchill.

"I am so proud to win the competition here in Wales," she said. "I have the privilege of representing my country and this is another step up. Hopefully, there will be more to come in the future."

She admitted that she wasn't expecting to win, having had a few problems with the new equipment

she brought with her to the final. "It could have gone better but that's competitions," she added. "I am very critical of my own performance.

"It was a very difficult competition against four other great young chefs. The talent in the kitchen was incredible. I owe a lot to my commis Jay who stepped up at the last moment and to my mum and dad whose support has been amazing."

Runner up was 16-year-old Abigail Williams, a student at Coleg y Cymoedd's Nantgarw Campus and Oliver Herrington, demi chef de partie at Celtic Manor Resort, Newport and Katie Duffy, second chef at Llanelli House, Llanelli, were joint third.

The other finalist, Falon Bailie, junior sous chef at Foyles of Glasbury, won the award for best dish in the final with his starter of Welsh hand dived scallops, cauliflower, pea, black pudding, pancetta, hazelnut and apple.

Colin Gray, chairman of the judges, praised Stephanie's "well executed dishes" and commitment to the competition, having only 12 days to compose a menu and work on her dishes.

He praised all the chefs for having the courage to enter and deserved special praise for Abigail. "She competed today at the age of 16 and I am staggered by the fact that this young lady has been cooking for just three or four months," he added. "She is definitely one to watch for the future."

"We also had a couple of new finalists, including 16-year-old Abigail Williams, which is brilliant to see. Abigail is a junior champion in the making," he said.

Duncan Foulke



# Creative Listening

*"O listen! Listen more carefully to what is inside of you right now."*

~ Hafiz, 14th Century poem

**L**e'ts commit to being better listeners. Imagine you're having a conversation with someone. Here's a simple question: what is it you're listening to?

It's their voice, right? That's how communication works: essentially one person makes noises that are understood by the other, so that's what we're listening to.

Is it, though? What about our own thoughts? How much are we listening to those, instead? For example, weighing up what they're saying against what we know, listening in order to agree or disagree; being reminded of a similar thing that happened to us, that's too good not to share; holding on to a good idea we have, about how to respond; making judgements about how they are, or how we are, while they're talking; guessing what they're going to say next and skipping to the end to save time; or just blatantly being lost in thought and not listening at all... There are so many ways for our attention to get sidelined by our own minds, it's amazing we hear anything at all!

So what's the answer? Try really hard to pay attention? Parse their language for expressions of logic, or emotion, matching our responses accordingly, with reflection, empathy or counsel?

You can certainly try, and it may make you a better listener in the short term, but boy is it a lot of hard work and here's the kicker – all of that is giving you *more* to think about, generating more content in your mind, when we've established, you're supposed to be listening to them!

So here's an idea. How about doing nothing? Why not listen to them as you might listen to a piece of music? Just let their words wash over you and experience them without agenda, analysis or judgement. Give another the gift of being fully present with them in this way and you'll both reap the rewards: they will feel they have the space to speak openly and you'll get to really hear what they're saying, beyond the words.

Now, we've been taught that listening should be hard work, so it's inevitable that your mind will have a lot to say about this and continue with its incessant voice-over at first... but the more you observe what it's up to and gently dismiss its unhelpful commentary as getting in the way of listening, you'll see a change. It's like listening with your heart, instead of your head.

I'll concede I was nervous when I first tried this myself, for it seems alien, potentially even rude, but the very first time I did—at a conference, advising someone

about career change—I was completely blown away by what came to mind to share with them, when the time arrived... as were they!

Because when we really *listen*, having taken our own conditioned thinking out of the equation, we instantly experience a connection to something much bigger; something that incorporates the person we're talking to *and* everything they're saying. Call it wisdom, or intuition, God, life energy, presence, the Now—really, call it whatever you like—but it's an endlessly creative source, it's beautifully contextual to every situation we encounter and it feels really good whenever we relax into it.

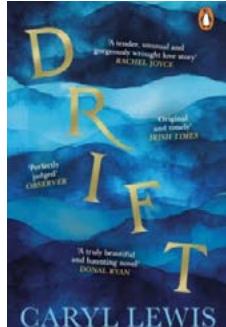
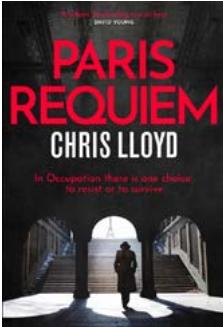
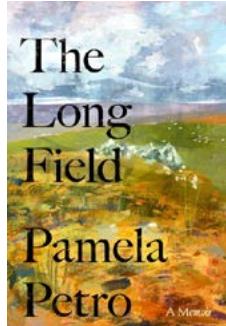
So why not give 'creative listening' a go and see what happens? It requires literally *no* effort on your part, and you'll be amazed by the results. What have you got to lose?



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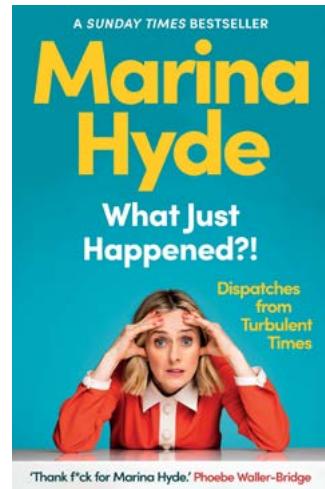
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# Books



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Marina Hyde

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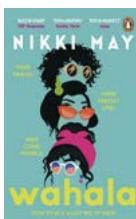
One of the wittiest, most lacerating columnists of our times, Marina Hyde collates a carnival of chaos in this splenetic account of post-referendum Britain, wrapping genuine anger and indignation in the sharpest of one-liners.



Start Painting  
Now: Discover  
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Emily Powell and  
Sarah Moore

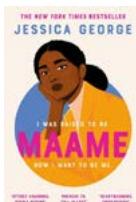
A practical, accessible guide to discovering your creative spirit, giving you brilliant new tools for relaxation and self-care. Instagram's favourite artist Emily Powell and her sister, doctor Sarah Moore, will guide you through the process of learning to ignore your inner critic and unwind from the stresses of daily life through painting.



Wahala  
Nikki May

£8.99

Three mixed-race friends navigate frustrated hopes and thwarted love in modern London, as a single terrible act threatens to spin their lives out of control in this darkly funny and scalpel sharp debut.



MAAME  
Jessica George

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Maddie knows what kind of woman she wants to be. One who wears a

bright yellow suit, dates men who definitely aren't on her mum's list of prospective husbands, and stands up to her boss's microaggressions. Someone who doesn't have to google all her life choices. Who demands a seat at the table. But will it take losing everything to find her voice? Unique, unfiltered and unforgettable, Maame is a deeply moving, achingly funny debut about finally finding where you belong.



Welsh Quilts  
Jen Jones

£12.99

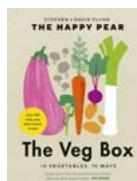
This new, expanded edition of Welsh Quilts is an authoritative guide to the history and art of the quilt in Wales. Expert author Jen Jones has added many new, high quality colour images - some never seen before. Textile legend Kaffe Fassett has written a Foreword to the book.



Plant  
Gynelle Leon

£15

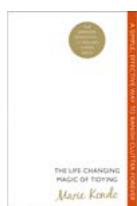
Plant is a stylish, practical, modern guide to the world of house plants by the Guardian houseplant columnist, Gynelle Leon, giving you all the knowledge you need to help your plants thrive.



The Veg Box  
Stephen and  
David Flynn

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An inspiring guide to making the most of your veg box, this cheery volume from the brothers behind the online sensation The Happy Pear takes ten popular vegetables and shows ten inventive ways of enjoying them.



The Life  
Changing  
Magic of  
Tidying  
Marie Kondo

£12.99

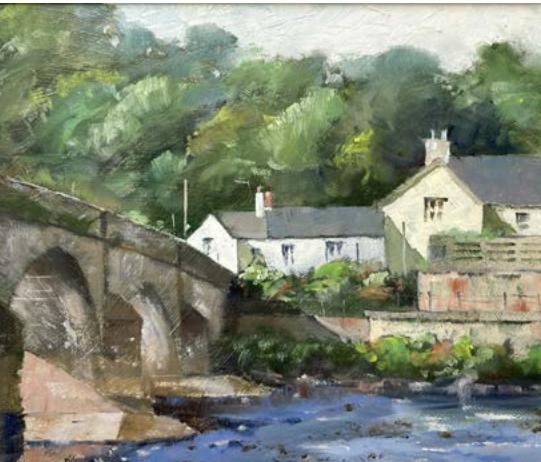
Japan's expert declutterer and professional cleaner Marie Kondo will help you tidy your rooms once and for all with her inspirational step-by-step method.

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# Call to artists Crickhowell Open Art Competition



TOP: Lee Wright - *Towards Cwmdu*,

LEFT: Peter Cronin, *Bridge at Usk*,  
RIGHT: Lucy Corbett, *Towards the Sugarloaf*

The brighter days of Spring are seeing visitors arriving to enjoy the area, stopping off at CRiC in the centre of Crickhowell for advice on where to explore, pick up a guide or two, a gift to remind them of their visit or a browse in the Oriel CRiC Gallery's latest exhibition. Eagerly anticipating St David's Day and the Crickhowell Walking Festival (4 – 12 March 2023), Crickhowell is gearing up to showcase the area at its best.

Stepping into spring the oriel CRiC gallery celebrates the artists whose creativity reflect the beauty of the landscape in all its rich diversity. Painting, printmaking, ceramics, sculpture, jewellery, studio glass and textiles all add to the exceptional variety offered by this small but beautiful gallery in the heart of the Crickhowell.

Running from mid-March the Spring exhibition will be followed by the Crickhowell Open Art exhibition which has become a highlight of a weekend filled with art to explore, not only in Crickhowell, but also across the surrounding area.

Artists are invited to enter up to three wall mountable works of art in the Open competition. Entry is free, but if work is selected an admin fee is charged

per selected item. Further details can be found on [www.orielcric.wales](http://www.orielcric.wales) or by emailing [galleryst@visitcrickhowell.wales](mailto:galleryst@visitcrickhowell.wales)

in a diverse exhibition starting during the Crickhowell Open Studios Weekend. (Spring Bank Holiday weekend 27 to 29 May 2023)

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[www.visitcrickhowell.wales](http://www.visitcrickhowell.wales)  
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Suzette Pratton

LEFT: Lee Wright - *The Tow Path Llyngynidr*  
RIGHT: Lucy Corbett - *The Dyffryn Crawnon*



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# AROUND THE WORLD WITH HENRY HEDGEHOG

HI EVERYBODY! THIS MONTH I AM IN CHINA VISITING THEIR GREAT WALL!

CAN YOU HELP THE PANDA ON THE CORRECT PATH OF THE GREAT WALL SO THAT HE CAN REACH THE TOWER?

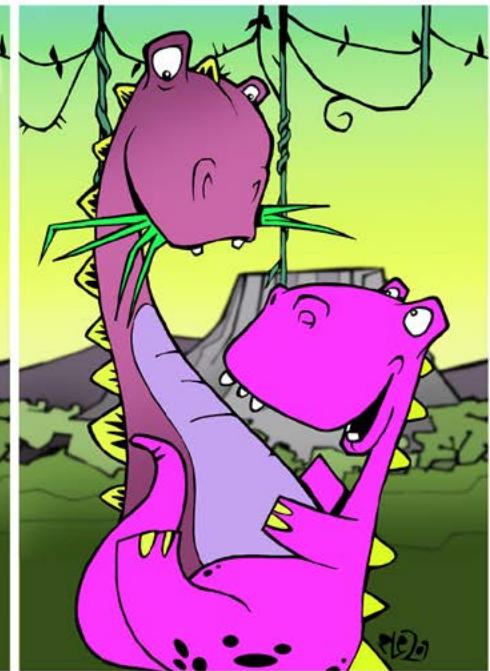
**FINISH**



The Chinese New Year started on January 31st. Can you name the animal sign for this year?



## SPOT THE DIFFERENCE!



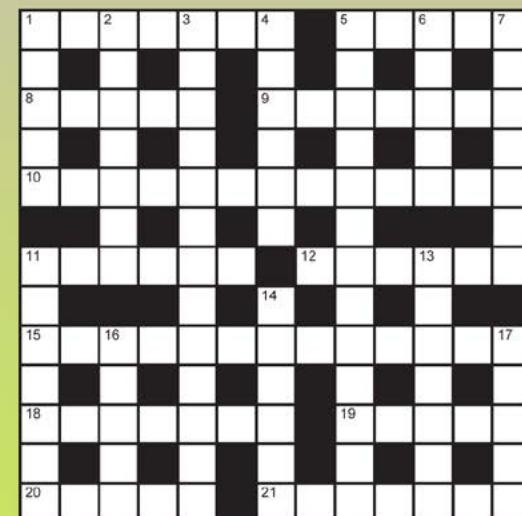
## QUICK CROSSWORD

### Across

- 1 Bewitched (7)
- 5 Trimmed (5)
- 8 Loosens (5)
- 9 Evil (7)
- 10 Vertical (13)
- 11 Without trouble (6)
- 12 Teeth (6)
- 15 Display (13)
- 18 Detonate (7)
- 19 Business transactions (5)
- 20 Stairs (5)
- 21 Destroys hearing (7)

### Down

- |                     |                      |                         |
|---------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Crawl (5)         | 5 Book of facts (13) | 13 Shake briskly (7)    |
| 2 Soaks up (7)      | 6 Guttural noise (5) | 14 To be present at (6) |
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| 4 Split (6)         | 11 Perpetual (7)     | 17 Facial features (5)  |





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