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## Dear Readers,



Did you know that creativity increases dopamine levels, and dopamine is responsible for that internal feeling of happiness? That means creativity effectively makes you happy. We like to spread happiness about as much as possible in the Focus and it's long been my aim that when you put down your copy of this magazine after reading it, you'll feel a smidge happier and more uplifted than before. That's the aim this month and we have lots of creative stuff for you to get your teeth into!

My daughter, Pippa, is a creative whirlwind and just about the most creative person I know. As a result, my home is littered with bits of paper and card which, to me, look like bits of paper destined for the bin. I'll occasionally scoop them up, in a bid to tidy up, only to be told 'NO! That's my crystal sorcery portal device' and then I'll have to put it back and fight the urge to de-clutter my home of these little creations. My point is that she is prolific and she creates with abandon; she doesn't care how it looks to anybody else or that I might think it's something destined for the bin. No, she does this stuff because it brings her joy, makes her happy and helps her to express herself.

Creativity means different things to each of us. Lots of us are immobilised by the idea that we 'can't'. So, I urge you, when you leaf through this month's magazine, to think like Pippa...assume you can and go ahead and do it!

Enjoy the read!

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# Andy's Man Club



Andy's Man Club was set up in Halifax, Yorkshire seven years ago by Luke Ambler and Elaine Roberts, the brother-in-law and mother of Andy Roberts who took his own life at 23 without any warning.

The family realised something needed to change and a space needed to be created for men to talk openly in a non-judgemental, non-clinical environment about their thoughts and feelings. It aims to end the stigma surrounding men's mental health and it acknowledges the fact that 'It's Ok to talk'.

7 years later there are over 130 clubs across the UK providing men with the opportunity to discuss their thoughts, feelings and emotional worries. One of these clubs is in Abergavenny. It has been running for just over a year and has an established number of regular attendees. The club is regularly welcoming at least 19 men on a weekly basis.

Some come each week whilst others dip in and out and use the club when they feel they need the support the club offers.

The club has a core of 7 facilitators who lead each session and are there not just to lead the sessions but to ensure new attendees and regulars are welcomed and made to feel comfortable.

Many attendees say that the biggest step is opening the door and entering the group however they say that once that has been done the welcome and support, they get from the group is incredible. It provides not just the opportunity to offload and talk about your feelings but in the words of some of the attendees it gives them the opportunity to 'refocus' for the week.

The format is very informal and there is no pressure on anyone to talk. Sessions are free, confidential and judgment free. Talking isn't compulsory, men can just come along, enjoy a brew and a biscuit

and support other men as they discuss their thoughts, feelings and experiences.

Club times are: Every Monday (except Bank Holidays) 19:00 hrs until 21:00 hrs.

Meetings are held in the Tythe Barn opposite St. Marys Church in Abergavenny NP7 5ND.

Daniel Davies

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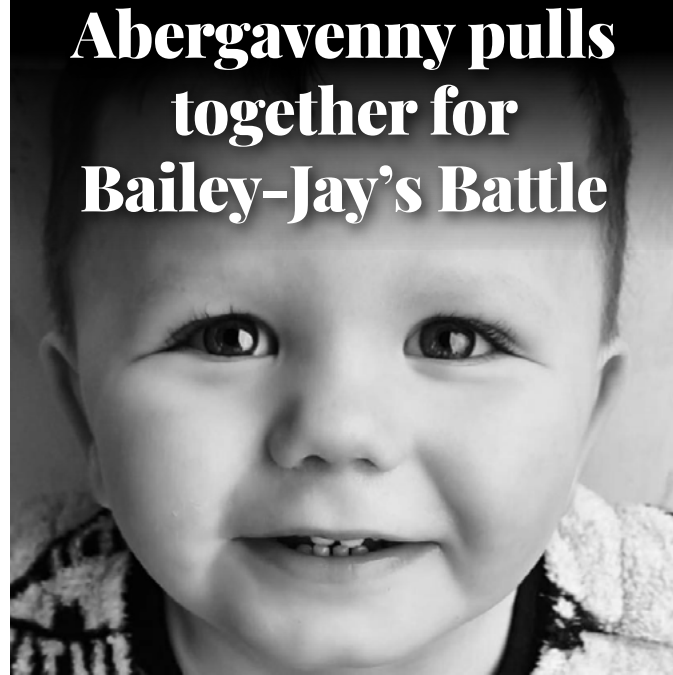
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# Abergavenny pulls together for Bailey-Jay's Battle

**B**ailey-Jay is a 2 year old boy from Abergavenny, who lives with his Mum, Dad and two sisters. The day after his second birthday, Bailey had a long awaited MRI Scan and was sadly diagnosed with a Brain tumour. Bailey had been suffering from episodes of right leg weakness, that progressed episodes of the whole right side becoming weak.

Three weeks after the diagnosis, it was discovered that Bailey-Jay's brain tumour was deemed inoperable, due to the high risk of permanent right side paralysis. Bailey-Jay was admitted into Noah's Ark Children's Hospital for brain tumour biopsy, which led to a gruelling 10 week wait for results.

Bailey-Jay was diagnosed with a Low Grade Glioma (Pilocytic Astrocytoma). These type of brain tumours usually have a good cure rate, if they can be fully resected, but as previously discovered, this isn't possible in his case. A team

of specialists at Noah's Ark have decided that the best course of action for Bailey-Jay at present, is to monitor the tumour's growth and for him to start seizure medication. If and when any growth is detected or the medication fails to control his seizures, he will then go in for a craniotomy surgery to debulk to tumour as much as possible. The remaining tumour will then be monitored for growth/change. If any is detected, he will then need further intervention, possibly further surgery or an 18 month course of Chemotherapy.

The debulking surgery still carries a high risk of causing Bailey a mobility deficit and possibly right sided paralysis. Bailey has already gone through so much in the last few months, from having his biopsy, several hospital stays, to four MRI/CT scans under general anaesthetic and, unfortunately, the journey ahead appears to be a long and difficult one for both he and his family.

Bailey-Jay's parents, family and friends have started fundraising to raise funds for Bailey and for any treatment, therapy or equipment he may need in the future. There is a Facebook page dedicated to Bailey-Jay's story and the fundraising efforts (Bailey Jay's Brain Tumour Battle). They are currently holding a raffle, which consists of over 70+ prizes, which have been kindly donated by local people and businesses. There is also a chance to buy keyrings (£4) and bracelets (£2.50) to show your support and solidarity. A fundraiser fun day is currently being organised to take place on the 26th of August at 1pm at Pen Y Pound Stadium, Abergavenny. They hope to see many of you there.

For more information please visit [www.thefocus.wales/Bailey-Jay](http://www.thefocus.wales/Bailey-Jay) where you can find links to fundraising pages, Bailey-Jay's Facebook page where you can buy for raffle tickets, keyrings and bracelets, as well as ways to contact the family to assist in fundraising or to donate.

Stacey Stevenson



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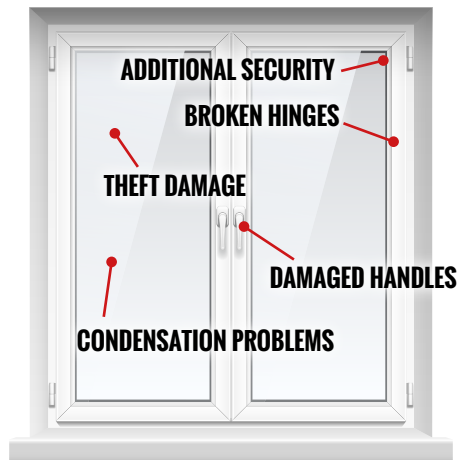
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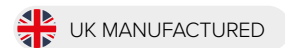
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On 1st October a new event is coming to  
Abergavenny Market Hall -The Greener  
Abergavenny Fair.

Are you concerned about the environment and the climate but unsure what you can do about it? We have experts to help us find ideas and actions to take to make a better, greener, sustainable future for all of us in Abergavenny. It's achievable!

Over 50 local groups and organisations are participating; companies such as Octopus energy,

## COMMUNITY

community groups such as Benthg, many local schools and charities like The Gwent Wildlife Trust and Friends of the Earth.

We have family friendly interactive activities, advice, music, talks and walks around our local green spaces. There will be something to interest all ages and all parts of our community.

For more information please contact  
[greenerabergavenny@gmail.com](mailto:greenerabergavenny@gmail.com).

and watch this space for more to come about the day as we share the programme in next month's Focus Magazine.

Please save the date, Sunday 1st October.

We look forward to seeing you on the day!

Gary Smith



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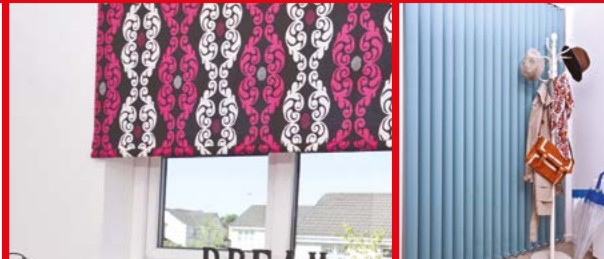
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## Reflections on Abergavenny Trees



Trees at Castle Meadows

The Abergavenny context is striking - hills, like giants at hunting, lay. These are enhanced as their bald heads rise from dense masses of trees: these trees are the crowning beauties of the town. Normally access to nature's treasures, especially trees, requires time and a commitment to hard walking. Fortunately, Abergavenny seems to have been developed - possibly subconsciously - with a view to making trees accessible to all, the old, the infirm and even those without a car!

Trees are accessible from the bustling town centre. Minutes away, Linda Vista Gardens features many trees. The house is shielded from neighbours by a splendid Holm Oak and London Plane, each a mature centenarian but half the age of the huge beech at the main entrance. The Gardens and its immediate environs feature up to a hundred species and varieties of trees. Established in 1875, the trees' ages reflect the Gardens' development by successive owners. Since the 1960s, under local authority control, foreign trees have been introduced, such as the Monkey Tree, an Indian Bean tree, the Dawn Redwood and a Gingko, the 'living fossil'.



Dawn Redwood

A little further from the town centre is Bailey Park, an urban park opened in 1884. It features the usual sporting facilities and special events, all set against an imposing backdrop of evergreen and deciduous trees. An avenue of ancient oaks and beeches remains to show what once existed; these are now augmented by a range of impressive evergreen trees.

Swan Meadow, a delightful gem, nestles near the bus station. It is dominated by a Dawn Redwood, an imposing stripling of little more than sixty years, and the Gavenny river divides the Meadow into two. One side is a wilderness: trees, plants and undergrowth make walking difficult. The other side

offers strollers, nature lovers and children a haven; grass swards, shrubs, elegant trees, a playground, and even a Gorsedd Stone Circle. Maples, alders, and willows display an annual parade of colours that end in riot in autumn.

Trees thrive outside the formal planted areas. Following the Gavenny river upstream leads to woodlands growing profusely along the river. In addition, around the former Pen-y-fal hospital are stands of old and recently planted trees. Unusually for woodland, numerous huge horse chestnuts grow, Tolkien-like monsters, many of the leaves ravaged by miner moth blight. Sweet chestnuts are to be seen, descendants of those brought to Britain by the Romans nearly two millennia ago. Elsewhere, the Pen-y-Pound stadium is overlooked by a huge London Plane. Near the railway station two broad oaks - possibly 300 years old - dominate passing traffic. Over the last two centuries Abergavenny has expanded but many trees remain, testimony to the concern shown towards them.

But something is missing. Those who love or like trees usually long to name them. In this respect, Abergavenny disappoints. A few Linda Vista trees are labelled with their common and scientific names. This practice could be extended. Less anonymity would enable tree lovers in Abergavenny to greet their friends by name.

Anthony Hopkin





# IMPROVING OUR RIVER QUALITY

# GWELLA ANSAWDD EIN DŴR AFONOL



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 our rivers.

Our research with Natural Resources Wales shows that our assets (i.e. our treatment works, Combined Storm Overflows or CSOs) are responsible for around 21% 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.

We have permits in place at our wastewater treatment works to protect the river. These permits are set by our environmental regulators and can be changed by them when needed, to reflect the changing needs of the river, or when new evidence is found. When this happens, we work with our regulators to improve and upgrade our treatment works.

We understand that river water quality is an important matter for local residents and we are committed to playing our part to reducing our impact on the river Usk and the wider environment. To find out more visit [dwrcymru.com/environment](http://dwrcymru.com/environment) or scan this handy QR code.



Fel cwmni, rydyn ni'n cymryd ein cyfrifoldebau dros amddiffyn yr amgylchedd o ddiifri. Dyma pam ein bod ni wedi bod yn datblygu cynlluniau i wella'r dŵr yn ein hafonydd.

Mae ein gwaith ymchwil gyda Chyfoeth Naturiol Cymru'n dangos bod ein hasedau (fel ein gweithfeydd trin, a'n Gorlifoedd Storm Cyfun neu CSOs) yn gyfrifol am tua 21% o'r ffosffadâu yn afon Wysg, o'r CSOs sy'n gyfrifol am gwa 1%. Mae'r gweddill yn cael ei achosi gan ffactorau eraill fel defnydd tir gwledig a bow anifeiliaid, dŵr yn draenio oddi ar wynebau trefol, draeniau sydd wedi eu cam-gysylltu, a thanciau septig preifat.

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# August at Abergavenny Castle Outdoor Theatre Shows

*Summer Holidays are here and MonLife Heritage Museums are bringing a fabulous programme of outdoor theatre to Abergavenny Castle in August. There will be great fun with the hilarious Pantaloons and their productions of Jane Austen's Emma and Alice's Adventures in Wonderland and kids will love the adaptation of David Walliams' best seller Bad Dad.*



**Friday 4 August 7pm**

## Jane Austen's Emma

*with The Pantaloons*

Gates open 6pm

The season kicks off with the critically acclaimed Pantaloons Theatre Company's hilarious yet faithful new adaptation of Jane Austen's satirical story of misguided matchmaker Emma trying to play Cupid with unexpected results. A riotous Regency rom-com.



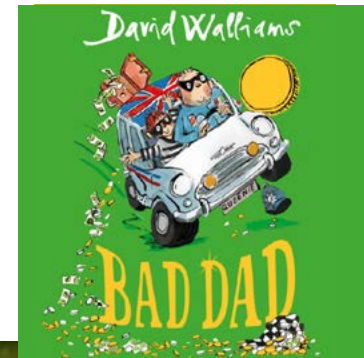
**Saturday 12 August 6pm**

## David Walliams' Bad Dad

*with Heartbreak Productions*

gates open 5pm

Heartbreak Productions have adapted David Walliams' book Bad Dad for an outdoor production for children aged 7+, at the earlier hour of 6pm, great for all the family. This warm-hearted tale follows the highs and lows of a father-son relationship. Follow Frank and Gilbert as they navigate through car chases and convicts in the struggle to escape the clutches of the local crime lord and clear Gilbert's name..



**Thursday 17 August 7pm**

## Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

*with The Pantaloons* - gates open 6pm



Enter the fantastic world of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. This delightful show just gets curiouser and curiouser, so pack a picnic and come down the rabbit hole for The Pantaloons take on Lewis Carroll's nonsensical novel. Great fun for all the family awake at that time in the evening!

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**Brecon Jazz @ 40**  
Celebrations across the town in August

Emma Rawicz

**B**recon Jazz Festival 2023 celebrates 40 years of incredible music, with jazz lovers and musicians from across the world and UK coming to celebrate the thrilling sounds of BJF2023. With a wide programme across three amazing weekends in August, there are events to delight all musical tastes.

The festival begins on Sunday 6th August with our 'Family Jazz & Dance Day' at the Brecon Showground Marquee. Offering engaging workshops for all ages, food and drink stalls on site, and a music programme packed with jazz action. From swing style at 2pm, salsa/Cuban from 4:30, the funky tracks of the ten-piece band Funkyard at 7.15pm – what a great way to get ready for the month of music ahead!

The classic BJF weekend of Friday 11th, 12th, 13th August delivers a feast of 'reunion' as well as brand new lineup celebrations for the BJF 40-year legacy. Showcasing leading names of the UK jazz scene Gary Crosby and Emma Rawicz alongside international talents LaVon Hardison and Gary Brunton, with the newest jazz names Ursula Harrison, Rachel Starritt, Tiggy Blackwell - representing a sparkling new era for BJF.

The festival draws to a close on Sat/Sun 19th & 20th August with outward-looking jazz and world music – French, Argentinian, American – plus a specially-curated 8-piece performance by renowned jazz pianist Zoe Rahman. It's followed by a livestream concert (Theatr Bar) from 'Brecon Jazz in London' with partners Mood Indigo - all celebrating 40 years of BJF.

Full details of BJF2023 programme at [www.breconjazz.org](http://www.breconjazz.org)

Lynne Gornall



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Email your answers by 15th August to [hello@thefocus.wales](mailto:hello@thefocus.wales) with the subject 'AFF Competition'. One entry per person.

Share amazing food with family and friends and celebrate with the UK's creative and spirited food community. It's all happening over the weekend of 16 and 17 September.



As well as an unrivalled selection of exhibitors and caterers, there's also a rolling programme of talks, debates, tastings, workshops and family entertainment. A terrific day out with free entry for all children under 16. See the full line-up at [www.abergavennyfoodfestival.com](http://www.abergavennyfoodfestival.com)



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## AUGUST EVENTS CALENDAR

**4TH AUGUST**

**Abergavenny Castle Outdoor Theatre  
JANE AUSTEN'S EMMA  
WITH THE PANTALOONS**



See our advert Pags 18-19 for info and booking details

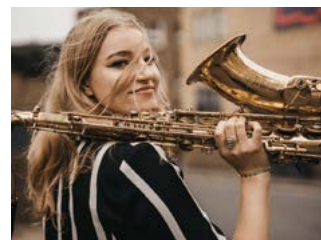
**NOW UNTIL 5TH AUGUST  
ABERGAVENTNY ART GROUP  
ANNUAL EXHIBITION**

Join us to view the latest artwork created by local artists. Free entry! 10am – 5pm, Trinity Hall, Baker Street, Abergavenny

**5TH AUGUST  
SUMMER FAIR**

Free Entry. 1pm – 5pm, Llanfoist Village Hall

**6TH-20TH AUGUST  
BRECON JAZZ FESTIVAL**



For dates, times and tickers visit [breconjazz.org](http://breconjazz.org)  
See our article on Page 21

**7TH AUGUST (AND EVERY MONDAY  
EXCEPT BANK HOLIDAY)  
ANDY'S MAN CLUB**



7pm-9pm, Tithe Barn, Monk St, Abergavenny  
See our article on Page 7 for more info

**8TH, 15TH, 22ND, 29TH AUGUST  
CRAFTING 4 CANCER**

Weekly crafting and support group. All welcome, free to participate 10.30a-1.30pm, Tithe Barn, Abergavenny

**8TH & 22ND AUGUST  
ABERGAVENTNY ART SOCIAL**

Friendly art and craft social group. Bring your own projects. All skill levels welcome. Adults only. Free to join, snacks provided 6.30pm-8.30pm, Community Centre, Merthyr Rd, Abergavenny

**8TH & 22ND AUGUST  
ABERGAVENTNY ROLEPLAYING  
AND GAMING GROUP**

Board Games night 7pm, Somerset Arms Pub, Abergavenny

**8TH AUGUST (AND EVERY TUESDAY)  
FIND YOURSELF IN CRAFTS**

Not for profit craft group supporting mental health, loneliness and well-being. Craft materials to access. 9.30am-3.30pm, Melville Centre, Pen y Pound, Abergavenny  
Contact via Facebook page, [enquiries@findyourselfincrafts.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@findyourselfincrafts.co.uk) 07874695526 if you want any specific craft items brought to have a go at.

**9TH AUGUST**

**BREAST CANCER NOW TEA PARTY**

A fundraising Tea Party for Breat Cancer Now, supported by Govilon WI. Tea and cakes, raffle, competitions, children's activity table, lucky dip, designer jewellery 2.30pm-4.30pm, Salisbury Community Hall, Merthyr Rd, Govilon

**10TH AUGUST**

**PROMOBILITY MEETING**

For anyone with disabilities including vision loss, physical disabilities and those reliant on aids for mobility. All welcome 2.30pm, Trinity Hall, Baker St.

**11TH AUGUST**

**Llanfoist Village Hall Film Night  
LIVING (CERT PG-13)**

In 1950s London, a humourless bureaucrat decides to take time off work to experience life after receiving a grim diagnosis. Doors open 7pm, film starts 7.30pm. Tickets £5 adults, £3 children. Bar available. Llanfoist Village Hall, Church Lane, Llanfoist

**12TH AUGUST**

**Abergavenny Castle Outdoor Theatre  
DAVID WALLIAMS' BAD DAD WITH  
HEARTBREAK PRODUCTIONS**

See advert Pg 18-19 for info and booking details

**17TH AUGUST**

**Abergavenny Castle Outdoor Theatre  
ALICE'S ADVENTURES IN  
WONDERLAND WITH THE  
PANTALOONS**








See advert Pg 18-19 for info and booking details



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**17TH AUGUST**  
**REPAIR CAFÉ ABERGAVENNY**

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Book or just turn up. Labour free (donations welcome) – parts are not supplied.  
The object is to keep repairable items out of landfill  
11am-2pm  
Abergavenny Community Centre, Merthyr Road, Abergavenny

**19TH AUGUST**  
**BUG AND INSECT WALK IN CASTLE MEADOWS**

Meet Mark Butler for a walk to see the insect life in the meadows.  
2pm-4pm. Meet Byefield Lane Car Park. Wear suitable clothing

**20TH AUGUST**  
**PICNIC IN THE PARK**

Bring your own picnic and enjoy listening to performances by Abergavenny Borough Band  
1pm-3pm, The Bandstand, Bailey Park

**21ST AUGUST**  
**CEREAL SKETCHERS**

A monthly café breakfast drawing group. Summer holidays edition takes place at Ambika Social, Tudor St, Abergavenny – Bring the kids!  
Visit @cerealsketchers on Facebook or Instagram for Eventbrite links in order to book your FREE tickets

**21ST AUGUST****FREE TASTER SESSIONS WITH COMMUNITY LEARNING**

Mindfulness 10am-12pm, Join us in learning about this much-talked-about technique and how to introduce simple daily mindful practices into your everyday life. Don't miss out on experiencing 'the chocolate meditation'!  
Introduction to Pilates 12:30-2:30pm. Experience the purpose and benefits of Pilates by using its techniques in a chair-based session.  
Abergavenny Youth & Community Education Centre, Old Hereford Road  
[abergavennycommunitylearning@monmouthshire.gov.uk](mailto:abergavennycommunitylearning@monmouthshire.gov.uk) to book.

**23RD AUGUST**  
**UNDERSTANDING CARE INFORMATION EVENT**

Aim - to provide information for families and friends in Monmouthshire regarding care and support options for loved ones or themselves so as to understand that a planned approach using the available information is more effective and allows more controlled options than trying to make decisions in a crisis.  
3pm-4pm, Penpergwm House, NP7 9AH  
Spaces limited so must RSVP

**26TH AUGUST**  
**FAMILY FUN DAY**

A fun filled day, raising funds for Bailey-Jay's Brain Tumour Battle. Free Entry  
1pm, Pen y Pound Stadium, Abergavenny, NP7 7RN  
See page 9 for more info

**26TH & 27TH AUGUST**  
**SAVOY YOUTH THEATRE GROUP****PRESENTS: SHREK JR**

2pm and 6.30pm, Savoy Theatre, Monmouth  
Tickets from Box Office: 01600 772 467 or [monmouth-savoy.co.uk](http://monmouth-savoy.co.uk)

**27TH AUGUST**  
**SUNDAY AFTERNOON TEA & CHAT**

3pm, Abergavenny Community Centre, Merthyr Rd, Abergavenny  
See Advert Pg 13 for more info

**29TH AUGUST**  
**TEA FOR TENOVUS**

Fundraising event  
Tickets £7.50 from choir members or from their bucket collection day at Morrisons on 22nd Aug 5pm, St Mary's Priory. Entry includes refreshments

**LOOKING AHEAD****16TH & SEPTEMBER**  
**25TH ABERGAVENNY FOOD FESTIVAL**

See Page 23 for more info and ticket details

**SHARE YOUR EVENTS**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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We are a well-established specialist cleaning company based right here in Abergavenny although our customer base now stretches across Wales and into England, thanks to the popularity of what we offer in terms of services.

We offer all manner of different services which include, office cleaning, end of tenancy cleans,

holiday lets, builders cleans (after you've had the builders in and there are layers of dust everywhere), one off cleans and property management services to name a few.

Our cleans extend to residential homes, nursing homes, GP surgeries, hospitals, hotels, restaurants, cafes and dental practices. In short, if you have a space that needs cleaning, we can offer a service to suit!

We pride ourselves in our efficient and professional approach with fantastic results that builds trust with our customers. So, if you'd like to chat about your needs and gain a free, no obligation quote, call 01873 609155, email us [info@srpcleaningltd.uk](mailto:info@srpcleaningltd.uk) or check out our website [srpcleaningltd.uk](http://srpcleaningltd.uk)

### Some of our reviews:

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"Excellent Service from SRP Cleaning Services. Very professional and respectful. Work completed to a very high standard. We've had many cleaning companies come and clean our home and SRP Cleaning Services are the best we've had in, very thorough and attention to detail. Keep up the good work! We will now be using this company every week."

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# Breakthrough

## Mortgage & Financial Services



the biggest monthly cost for most of us, so it's essential homeowners act if their current fixed product is coming to an end.

At some time, we all need to call on the help of a specialist, whether this be in terms of a trade, or specialist services such as tax or pensions; it's no different with the mortgage market. A good broker will have expert knowledge of the mortgage market and work with you to find out what is the best option for your individual circumstances. Most of Breakthrough Mortgages customers let them take the burden of the mortgage application off their shoulders and hold their hand through what can be a stressful time.

Remember while current lenders may offer a rate to stay with them; they can only provide details of their rates whereas Breakthrough Mortgages work with almost 90 different lenders, so they are not restricted to one particular bank or building society. While some lenders only offer certain deals or products direct to their customers, a mortgage broker can access Exclusive Deals that simply aren't available on the high street.

With 4 advisors covering all of NP7, NP8, LD3 and beyond, Breakthrough Mortgages Advisors are available to discuss your mortgage needs. Whether that's a straightforward re-mortgage, a move to a new home or looking for funding for a more complicated project, the friendly and approachable teamwork daytimes and evenings to accommodate all working patterns and can come to your house for a face to face meeting or just arrange a chat on the phone for advice. For more information call 01873 831988 and start the process of sourcing your next mortgage.

\*\* Source Fran Ivens For This Is Money

### Who are Breakthrough?

Breakthrough Mortgage and Financial Services Ltd are a Mortgage Brokerage with over 20 years' experience of arranging mortgages and have been based in Abergavenny for over 12 years. With a team that live in Govilon, Crickhowell and Gilwern their customer base includes a wide range of clients from first-time buyers to landlords. Working with all types of new and existing mortgage clients, their time is focused on working with customers, to source new deals as their current mortgage deals end, to secure a mortgage for a purchase or supporting them with needs such as life insurance or income and critical illness protection.

### Rising rates and homeowners

It's hard to avoid the constant talk of interest rate rises and Breakthrough Mortgages are

speaking with more and more new customers who simply don't know what to believe or where to turn. Chris Sykes of brokers Private Finance noted: "There is every possibility we could see average rates hitting 7 per cent. If inflation doesn't improve, this could be reached very quickly."

There is little relief on the horizon for homeowners, as mortgage costs continue to rise on the back of expectations that the Bank of England will further increase its base rate. For those needing to re-mortgage in the near future, the options are unattractive with nearly 40 per cent of current fixed mortgage deals come to an end before 2025, many of which are currently on rates below 2 per cent\*\*. The current market offering looks very different. The Breakthrough Mortgages team would tell anyone with a mortgage not to put your head in the sand and hope it will get better. Mortgage payments are probably



# Regulation, Compliance



**T**here is a misconception in some corners that being an estate agent is a very glamorous job swanning around looking at houses and fawning over Instagram. If only...

Prior to becoming an estate agent, I worked in financial services and for a while, was responsible for compliance of the financial services arm of a well known high street building society. The world was a very different place then, paper files, reams of documents, manual checking of information

and rooms full of files which were audited every quarter. Roll on 25 years and whilst there have been advances in technology, the amount of compliance and regulation has increased and there are still paper files.

The remarkable and perhaps, frightening fact, is that to be an estate agent, you are not required to have any qualifications – anyone could set up tomorrow and start handling the sale of most people's largest asset. For years, the estate agency industry itself has been calling for regulation but at the moment, other than the compulsory requirement to be members of a redress scheme and register with HMRC for Anti Money Laundering, training and qualifications are not mandatory.

Lettings in Wales is slightly different, all letting agents have to pass exams with Rent Smart Wales and be part of a redress scheme but alarmingly, there is no requirement for client accounts, where rents and deposits are held, to be audited.

So what are the main areas of regulation? In addition to general legislation including Equality Act 2010, Health and Safety, GDPR and Data Protection to name a few, the primary legislation Estate Agents have to comply with :-

- HMRC Anti Money Laundering Regulations
- Estate Agents Act 1979
- Consumer Protection From Unfair Trading Regulations 2008
- The Property Ombudsman Code of Practice

Trading Standards are responsible for ensuring legislation (other than HMRC AML) is adhered to, the national trading standards

authority which covers Estate Agents is based in Powys. Trading Standards issue guidelines for Estate Agents which details the relevant legislation and requirements.

HMRC carry out checks on Estate Agents to ensure that due diligence is carried out with regard to the funding of a purchase, confirmation that people who are they claim to be and that there are no suspicions by the agent with regard to the source of funds. There have been numerous examples where agents have been heavily fined for not complying with AML legislation.

The Estate Agents Act 1979 specifies what an agent should do in terms of disclosing any conflict of interest or any personal interest in a property being sold, how fees are calculated and charged, how offers should be handled and anything relating to how an estate agent should operate.

Consumer Protection Regulations essentially covers how a property should be marketed to ensure that there is full disclosure and transparency. The regulations are in the process of being updated to ensure that an agent carries out as much due diligence as possible at the outset to ensure a buyer is aware of all material facts relating to a property. These regulations also apply to a seller who is under obligation to disclose any material facts when putting their property on the market for sale.

Estate Agents have to be a member of a redress scheme, the largest being The Property Ombudsman (TPO). The TPO issue a Code of Practice for Residential Estate Agents and there is a robust complaints process in place.

This is just a very brief overview of the legislation, to cover everything would take the whole edition of the Focus and more...

At Parrys, we aim to handle all our business transactions in a professional and compliant manner. We take legislation and learning very seriously encouraging all of the team to embark upon professional qualifications as well as undergoing mandatory training for Anti Money Laundering.

The main professional bodies covering residential estate agency are PropertyMark who incorporate the National Association of Estate Agents (NAEA) and Association of Residential Lettings Agents (ARLA) and Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors. These professional bodies are optional for Estate Agents and there are costs involved financially and investment in time. As the saying goes 'every day is a school day' and we encourage our team to study for their qualifications, cover the cost of their professional membership and ensure the company are members of professional organisations too. This enables us to ensure we are 'ahead of the curve' in terms of legislation, industry changes, technology and are able to offer a professional advice to our clients and customers.

Heather Cook

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# Brand New Programme for 2023-24 at Chapel Cottage Studio



Here at CCS you will find a "home from home" atmosphere where students are encouraged to enjoy a cup of tea and a chat while they learn. It doesn't matter if you haven't picked up a pencil since school or if you're a regular artist, we have classes and workshops to suit everyone.

The new programme is available to book via our website or you can contact us by email if you have any queries.

## \*\*Earn While You Learn at CCS\*\*

We will be running an exciting new "Earn While you Learn" promotion for the Autumn 2023 term.

Go to our website: [www.chapelcottagestudio.co.uk](http://www.chapelcottagestudio.co.uk) and subscribe to our newsletter to receive further details on this offer and how to take part. Full details will be sent out in August, so keep your eyes peeled!

As always, feel free to get in touch if you have any queries, we are very happy to help!

You can also keep up to date via facebook by searching *Chapel Cottage Studio*.

**T: 01873 840282**  
**M: 07935 934898**  
**E: [info@chapelcottagestudio.co.uk](mailto:info@chapelcottagestudio.co.uk)**  
**W: [chapelcottagestudio.co.uk](http://chapelcottagestudio.co.uk)**

*The .NEW 2023-24 programme of classes & events at Chapel Cottage Studio is packed full of fabulous Art classes and workshops to inspire you, including classes in watercolours, acrylics, oil painting, pastels, pencil drawing, lino printing and mixed media all with a choice of fantastic tutors.*

## September Workshops

For our full programme, please visit our website



### Simple Landscape in Pastels



Tutor: **Jantien Powell**  
 Date: **Saturday 9th September**  
 Cost: £ 75 pp  
 Time: 10.00 – 16.00

Learn how to create your own simple landscape scene in soft pastels. Including tips for composition, creating distance and focus and different methods for working with soft pastels. Suitable for all abilities but aimed at beginners or those new to the medium.

### Experimental Seed Heads in Mixed Media



Tutor: **Alison Board**  
 Date: **Friday 15th September**  
 Cost: £ 40 pp  
 Time: 13.30 – 16.30

In this exciting mixed media workshop students will be experimenting with the balance between abstract and realism with an expressive representation of the ever popular seed head, using a combination of watercolours as well as other medium and some unusual tools for application! Suitable for all abilities.

### Ring Tailed Lemur in Watercolour and Inks



Tutor: **Alison Board**  
 Date: **Saturday 16th September**  
 Cost: £75 pp  
 Time: 10.00 – 16.00

In this workshop students will be experimenting with watercolour and inks to create an expressive portrait of a ring tailed lemur. Ali will be looking at ways of creating life and energy in the painting through the method of application. Suitable for all abilities.

### Semi-abstract Landscape in Acrylics



Tutor: **Feona Ness**  
 Date: **Friday 22nd September**  
 Cost: £ 35 pp  
 Time: 13.30 – 16.30

Developing various painting techniques & applications as well as looking at light, reflection & colour. We will create a semi abstract landscape that feels peaceful and calming. Suitable for all abilities.

### Revealing Layers~ Abstract Workshop



Tutor: **Feona Ness**  
 Date: **Saturday 23rd September**  
 Cost: £65 pp  
 Time: 10.00 – 16.00

Creating an abstract painting in Acrylic. We will build up layers of gestural paint that will reveal and conceal. Starting with a vibrant background to a calming mid ground and finally bringing the composition together with the foreground. Suitable for all abilities.

### Sunlit Path in Acrylics




Tutor: **Mark Warner**  
 Date: **Saturday 30th September**  
 Cost: £85 pp  
 Time: 10.00 – 16.00

Within this full day acrylic painting workshop, you will experiment with colour, composition, brush strokes & texture. A path in the landscape can create a great sense of perspective and depth within a composition. Looking at how contrast in a painting can bring it to life and how harmonious colour can add to this. Suitable for all abilities.



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# Richard Meyrick Guitars

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L: Ground Floor, The Gallery, Abergavenny



**REFLEX  
MASSAGE**

**R**ichard Meyrick Guitars started from a tiny shed in my mums back garden just outside of Monmouth in 2008 after I graduated from university with a degree in guitar making and repair.

I've always been interested in guitars; tinkering around with electrics when I was a teenager playing in school rock bands from the local village halls and it went from there.

I studied guitar making in London where I learned all the basics of hand building acoustic guitars, from selecting the right woods to shaping the body and neck all the way to applying finishes to the completed instrument. I loved every minute of it and knew that once I graduated I wanted to set up my own guitar making business.

Living in London for three years gave me a real appreciation for the area I grew up in. I missed the

rolling hills and the fresh air and I couldn't think of anywhere else I'd want my business to be.

I've taken inspiration from my childhood holiday destinations in West Wales and have guitar models named after some of the beautiful bays and castles of that area; Oxwich, Rhossili, Amroth, Manorbier, Carningli and Pendine.

Over the years as the business grew, I had to say goodbye to my little shed and moved into bigger and bigger spaces. Since 2013 I've been working out of the old workhouse in Abergavenny where I welcome customers from all over the UK and beyond.

I've made guitars for people all over the world with some even coming back for a second and third. I was blown away when I was contacted by lead guitarist for the Manic Street Preachers, James Dean Bradfield, to make him a very special acoustic guitar which

**James Dean Bradfield of the Manic Street Preachers on stage at Glastonbury with one of Richard's creations**

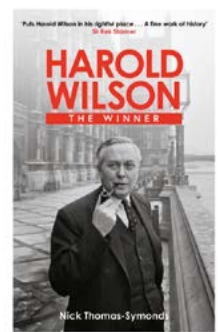
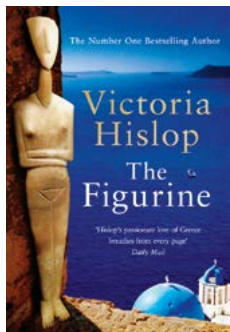
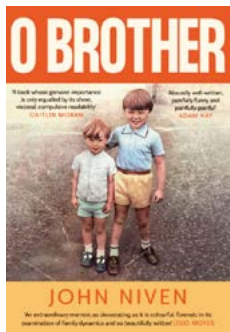
he recently took onto the stage at Glastonbury festival this year. To see my work out there like that was surreal but such a huge thrill.

Each build takes me around 100 hours work spread over four to five months; you really can't rush the process! I have students who join me in the workshop to learn to build their own instruments at their own pace who are with me for around nine months but many of them keep coming back to build multiple guitars. A current student is now working on his ninth guitar with me and has more ideas in the pipeline.

This year marks my 15th year in business and I'm looking forward to the next 15.

[www.richardmeyrickguitars.co.uk](http://www.richardmeyrickguitars.co.uk)  
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## Get your Creative Writing Juices Flowing

booked in advance and you can book your ticket online by visiting [bookish.co.uk/events](http://bookish.co.uk/events). The price of a ticket is £6.50 and includes a glass of wine or soft drink. There's also a 'Book-ish Writing Group' on Facebook where writers can keep in touch and share work and ideas between sessions.

If you're still unsure and need a little bit more convincing, take a look at what some of the members say about the writing group:

"The experience of writing together is a spur to creativity, but it can be scary. Will they hate my work? Or just think it's rubbish? No fears at all in this friendly group, where I felt accepted and encouraged from my very first visit. Recommended both for the experienced writer and the beginner. We are all equals here." John

"This writing group has helped me find a local community, motivation and feedback to fuel my creativity. It's an extremely friendly, safe and supportive environment. The new creative writing exercises each session are fun, engaging and stimulate plenty of conversation. Highly recommend! Why not come and join us?" Avril

"I joined the group to explore my writing ideas and develop my written work and style. It's a friendly, supportive group, whether you're a new or more experienced writer." Sarah

If you have questions, you can contact Hannah May by email: [hannah@book-ish.co.uk](mailto:hannah@book-ish.co.uk) Hannah and the rest of the Writing Group look forward to welcoming new members soon!

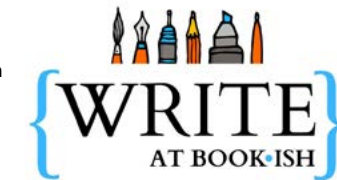
**T**here's one thing for sure, if you're an independent bookshop like Book-ish, you're going to attract a bunch of people who not only devour books, but also want to write them too. Or maybe just enjoy flexing their creative writing muscles. So, what do you do? Give them your loft once a month to get together and write! That's what Book-ish owner, Emma Corfield-Walters, did. The Book-ish Writing Group was thus born and has been going for just over a year now.

something. There's never any pressure to share work, but it's a very supportive group, so it's a great opportunity to do so."

The group meets monthly in an informal, friendly and inspiring setting. Members have the chance to write something new in every session and are invited to bring their own writing to share with the group. The evening usually includes writing prompts, laughter, refreshments and the chance to share ideas.

The group gets together at Book-ish in the upstairs loft on the first Monday of the month between 7pm and 9pm. Remaining 2023 dates for your diary are 4th September, 2nd October, 6th November, 4th December. All sessions need to be

Hannah May, who facilitates the group, said "It's great to have two hours a month dedicated to writing – and talking about writing! The evening always includes a few creative prompts, so everyone can leave the session having written



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# the Court Cupboard

## Craft Gallery

# Creative

craft workshops and classes this autumn at the Court Cupboard

Contact the artist for more information

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tv2pet@aol.com

### JEWELLERY MAKING WITH FRANCES LESTER

Sundays  
frances@franceslester.co.uk

### POTTERY WITH ALISON POWELL

14th october or 21st October  
apceramicsmonmouth@gmail.com

### WOMEN'S WOODWORK CLASSES

Weekdays and Chairmaking  
Weekends with Isis Rowan  
erowan56@gmail.com

### SPINNING WITH SARAH STACEY

Wednesdays  
sarahjstacey60@gmail.com



Enjoy good coffee and cake sitting outside with a fabulous view of the Skirrid, and browse the wonderful selection of art and crafts, displayed in the pretty converted barn, that is the gallery. We are a cooperative and most of the work for sale is hand made by our members, though we do have visiting exhibitors.

Pottery, fine art, photography, textiles, woodwork, leatherwork, stained glass, jewellery and metalwork.  
Open 11am to 4pm every day.

New Court Farm, Llantilio Pertholey, Abergavenny, NP7 8AU  
01873 852011 www.courtcupboardgallery.co.uk f /courtcupboard

## Art & Craft workshops and the Makers who teach them at the Court Cupboard Gallery



### Isis Rowan

Woodworker. Isis trained in Bristol in 1984 and has been chairmaking using traditional methods ever since. She offers Women's Woodwork classes and "make a chair in a weekend" courses.



### Alison Powell

Ceramic Artist. Alison trained in Cardiff, taught Art for 17 years and now makes and displays an amazing collection of ceramic hares. She offers a double workshop in October.



### Sarah Stacey

Spinner. Sarah learned at the Crickhowell Guild. She has a flock of Hill Radnor sheep whose fleeces she spins and dyes. She offers Wednesday workshops.



### Frances Lester

Jewellery Maker. A trained engineer, Frances makes and displays gorgeous hand-crafted jewellery in the gallery as well as curating our guest exhibitions, displaying the work of local artists. She offers Sunday workshops.

At the Court Cupboard we pride ourselves on being a valuable community resource, a not for profit cooperative and a centre of excellent local art. We welcome many visitors from home and abroad.



The Makers  
Craft  
Galleries

# The Makers Galleries

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The Makers  
Crafts Gallery  
Abergavenny

**Lulworth House**

**30 Monk St**

**Abergavenny NP7 5NP**

**Opening Hours:**

**Wednesday - Saturday:**

**10:30 to 4:00**

**Sundays : 11:00- 4:00**

The Makers  
at  
Craft  
Renaissance

**Craft Renaissance,**

**Kemeys Commander**

**NP15 1JU**

**Opening hours:**

**Tuesdays - Saturdays:**

**10:30 to 4:00**

**Sundays: 11:00 to 4:00**



**C**reativity is the beating heart of our Makers Craft Galleries in both Abergavenny and at Craft Renaissance.

From the vibrant artworks on display to the members' creative practices, and the workshops and classes we offer, creativity is the driving force that fuels our passion for art and craftsmanship.

Our members embody the essence of creativity! We are a community of talented artisans, designers and creators who love nothing more than sharing our ideas and skills – many of us run workshops, either at our studios, local venues, or at our Craft Renaissance site.

Our workshops and classes are designed to nurture and cultivate creativity. The variety of courses of offer provide a space for aspiring artists, hobbyists and enthusiasts to learn, share, grow and unlock their creative potential.

Our Makers are accomplished artists themselves, and love to foster an environment that encourages experimentation, whilst providing a friendly and professional environment to support all their participants. Everyone is welcome and everyone is encouraged to embrace their unique creative voices!

The workshops and classes we offer cover a broad range of topics, including willow weaving, ceramics, textiles, jewellery, glass art, drawing, and more. You can learn technical skills, but also discover the fun of imaginative thinking, problem solving and self-expression.

All our tutors believe that creativity is not for the select few, but we each hold a universal innate capacity, and creativity should be accessible to everyone.

Creativity is the ethos of our crafts galleries, our studios and

workrooms, and definitely at our workshops! We love to celebrate and foster creativity, and love facilitating classes and courses with our communities.

**The Makers Crafts Gallery:**  
Abergavenny, Lulworth House, 30, Monk Street NP7 5NP  
Open Tuesdays to Sundays

**The Makers at Craft Renaissance:**  
Kemeys Commander, NP15 1JU  
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[www.themakerscraftsgallery.co.uk](http://www.themakerscraftsgallery.co.uk)



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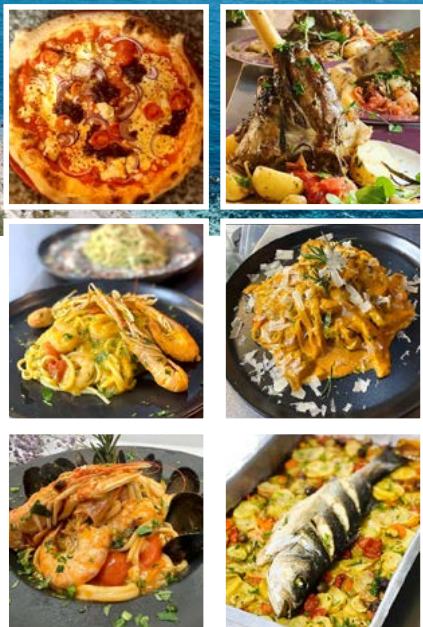
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**AMOS** is located at 43 Frogmore Street, Abergavenny.

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### CREATIVITY

## Melanie Made Mud

I was previously a pottery tutor for various Adult Learning services in West London. Having taught many learners over the years I began to relish the thought of some time to progress my own work further.

My family are all born and bred in the extraordinary heritage town of Blaenavon, my Grandcha having worked down The Big Pit. My parents left for work in the 60's, so I was born in London and might have ended up with a London accent but I am certainly Welsh at heart.

Experiencing the lifelong pull to settle in Wales 'hiraeth' I finally moved here permanently to settle on Llanelly Hill.

I teach from my home studio small groups of up to 4 people - hand building with clay skills and the pottery wheel - taster sessions and longer courses. My pottery sessions do not have set times or dates but are based on when customers are available, so I am always very flexible. You can come along for a taster, or learn a bit more about finishing your pots and adding handles, you can also have a try at glazing too.

The work I make is often related to my surroundings or inspired by my rescue lurchers or my crazy love for humpback whales. I exhibit and sell throughout the year at local fairs and in a few galleries (see The Makers, Abergavenny and Craft Renaissance) steadily establishing my small batch pottery.

Please follow me: @melaniemademud on Instagram and Facebook to see what I am up to!

Melanie Van de Velde



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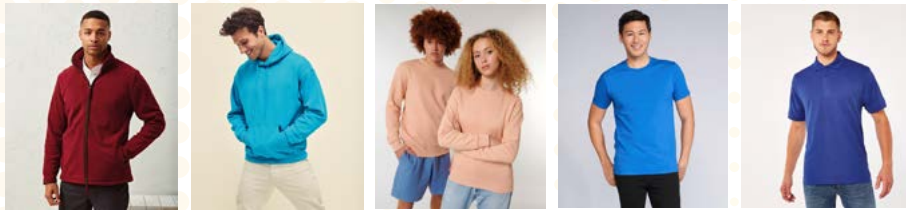
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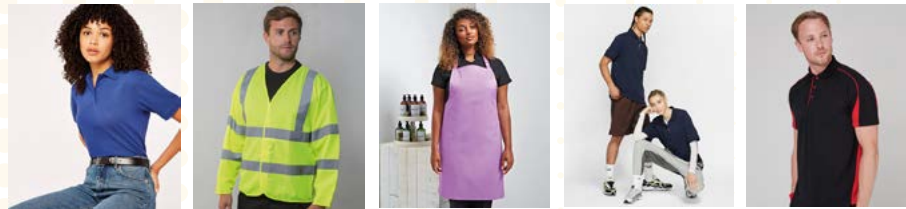


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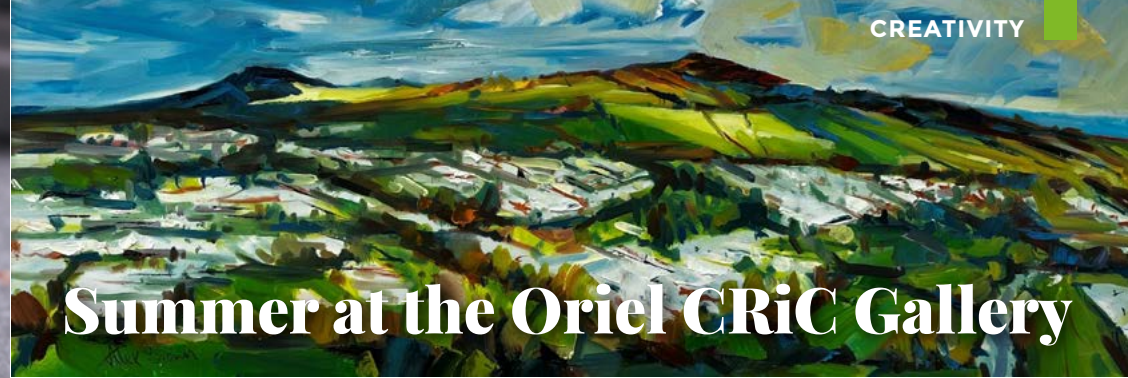


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# Summer at the Oriel CRiC Gallery

**O**ne might not agree with BBC arts correspondent Will Gompertz that "we are all artists, we just have to believe it, that's what artists do", but the value and benefits of leading a creative, productive life in some form cannot be denied.

The Oriel CRiC Gallery, Crickhowell is a showcase for regional and visiting artists who exhibit exceptional work and variety

in the programme of changing exhibitions. The hope is that it also inspires and encourages by being a welcoming venue and hosting an annual Open Art exhibition which creates an opportunity for a wide spectrum of artists to unleash their creativity.

The changing light and colours of the Welsh summer is reflected in many of the works in the current exhibition. With new work by numerous artists including

Tim Rossiter, Alex Brown, David Haswell, Elizabeth Westcott, Paul Rickard, Kay Leverton, Keith Foster and Martin Truefitt-Baker complemented by glass, ceramics, sculpture and jewellery, it is a visual feast. Whether visitors are just browsing or taking home a large painting or a small ceramic piece, they all value the creative skill that went into its creation.

The summer exhibition continues until 17 September.



Martin Truefitt Baker - Summer Agapanthus



Elizabeth Westcott paintings with ceramics by Christine Gittins and Valerie James



Jantien Powell - Shredded Wheat for Tea again



# HELP I OSOD EICH EIDDO



Mae Gwasanaeth Gosod Sir Fynwy'n cynnig ffordd wahanol a chost effeithiol o rentu eich eiddo.

Ein nod yw gwneud rheoli a gosod eich eiddo'n broses syml a rhwydd, a gweithio gyda chi ar reoli a hysbysebu eich eiddo yn ogystal â dod o hyd i denantiaid wedi'u fetio ar gyfer:

Cynlluniau Rhentu Preifat

Cynlluniau Lesio Preifat

Gyda chymorth ac arweiniad gan ein tîm, cyfeillgar, profiadol a phroffesiynol.

Mae Gwasanaeth Gosod Sir Fynwy'n cynnig cynlluniau gosod tymor byr a hirdymor. At hyn, mae gennym lesoedd hirdymor, rhwng pump ac ugain mlynedd, ar gael drwy 'Gynllun Lesio Cymru' a ariennir gan Lywodraeth Cymru ac a reolir gan Wasanaeth Lesio Sir Fynwy.

Mae grantiau ar gael i helpu dod â chartrefi gwag yn ôl i gael eu defnyddio.

Os oes diddordeb gennych mewn gosod eich eiddo, neu os hoffech fwy o fanylion ynglŷn â'r gwasanaeth a'r hyn yr ydym yn ei gynnig, cysylltwch â Clare Hamer

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## One Minute to a Calmer Mind

Try this quick experiment:

Think of something that makes you feel a little anxious.

Notice where the feeling is in your body. Do you have an uneasy churning in your stomach? Does your chest feel tight or your throat constricted? Place your hand where the feeling is.

Now, take your focus off the thinking that created this uncomfortable feeling and instead focus on the physical sensations in your body. Notice what happens.

We're designed in a way that we can't spend more than a few moments focused on a physical sensation before it starts to shift. Follow it and you'll find it completely disappears now you're no longer lost in the thought that created it.

Why does this happen? Because you've moved your attention out of your head and into your body, which forces you into the present moment. Your body can only ever live in the here and now, while the inside of your head works more like a time machine, looking forward with fear, or back with anger and regret.

Try this the next time you feel yourself getting anxious. You might be amazed how quickly those familiar uncomfortable feelings melt away.

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# August Weather Outlook

by Jonathan Powell

After a blazing start to the summer, July somewhat failed to ignite properly and match June's run of dry, sunny, and very warm weather. Instead, showery conditions accompanied by cooler temperatures and at times gusty winds dominated. August too will suffer a similar rash of showers, occasionally thundery in nature, but as the month develops, there is the prospect of better weather unfolding. With the introduction of such conditions favouring some stability, temperatures will respond nicely and some very warm values are to be expected. From mid to late August and into the early part September, there is the potential for a run of fine and settled weather before autumn passes just more than a glance in our direction. On the average for rainfall during August, above the average for temperature.

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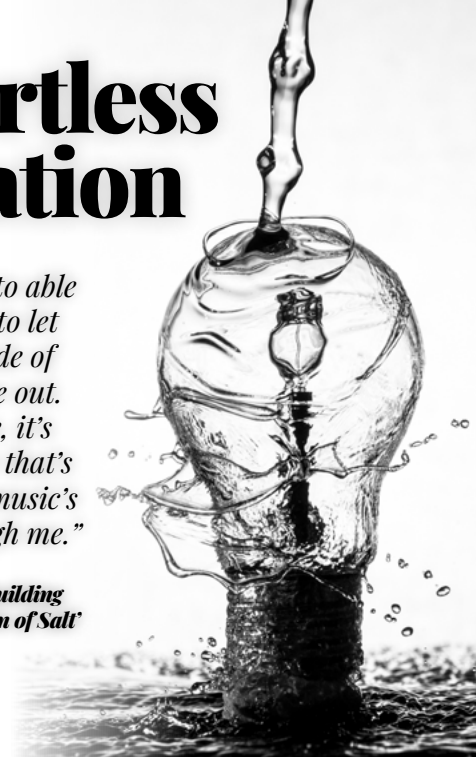
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# Effortless Creation

*"I would like to be able to continue to let what is inside of me... to come out. And it's like, it's not really me that's coming. The music's coming through me."*

~ DJ Shadow, *'Building Steam with a Grain of Salt'*



**H**ere's this month's question: **Do you see yourself as being a creative person?**

The direction the mind often takes when asked this, is to paintings and music and crafts and literature and works of art and unless one of these endeavours is something you've devoted yourself to, that same mind concludes that you don't measure up and the answer is a resigned, "Not really, no."

Of course, if we're to become *proficient* at any of these, there are skills to be learned and practice to be done (a fact my daughter rails against, sitting there at the piano, protesting loudly at the discovery she can't 'just play' a new piece her teacher has prescribed).

But whenever a client quietly confesses to me that they're "just not a creative person" I have to chuckle, because the *capacity* to create — to bring forth 'some thing' from the limitless potential of 'no thing' — is part and parcel

of the human operating system.

We are creative beings — it's just what we do! You can't escape the act of creation, because your very experience of life itself is a creative process, generated from within your psychology, beautifully summed up by the quote, *"We see the world not as it is, but as we are."*

Most of us sense that when it comes to the typical creative endeavour, things flow most easily when we get out the way of the mind's chatter and let whatever it is that wants to come into creation, just come; the million dollar question then being: *but how?* How do we let go the noise of our doubts and fears, be more present to the job at hand and spend more time in that elusive flow state, effortlessly creating our lives?

Maybe the answer lies in seeing that our behaviour in any given moment is governed wholly by our appreciation of how life works. So if on some level we believe that nuggets of wisdom, inspiration and innovation are to be found in the

contents of our analytical thinking, then it makes *total* sense to pay attention to such thinking... to the detriment of presence and flow.

But if we see the mind's output for what it is — stale, scripted data being churned algorithmically from the memory banks of our conditioning — it makes a lot less sense then to be distracted from our creation by the analytical mind. When we acknowledge it is working off *such* limited data and it holds *none* of the creative spark we seek, we stop turning to it for support, instead idly batting it away like a fly at a picnic, whenever it re-appears.

This simple, powerful distinction hit home for me recently, as I worked with a client whose stated aim was to become free from their incessant overthinking. Curious, I asked what was stopping them from dismissing these fly-like thoughts and getting on with their life? *"Well, some of them seem like they might be useful,"* they replied, unaware that this innocent belief was the source of their distress. For as long as it remained, they would be forever scanning the content of their thoughts for gold that is not there, thereby perpetuating the miserable cycle of hyper-vigilance and mental anguish.

When it comes to creativity, the question then is not so much, *"How can I be more creative?"* but rather *"What misunderstanding distracts you from your innately creative nature?"*

As that is something you can never be truly separate from, you'll find it patiently waiting for you to enjoy, whenever your focus returns, naturally, to the Now.



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# Books

*This month the Book-ish Booksellers get into the spirit of Creativity with these inspired book suggestions*



### Novelist as a Vocation Haruki Murakami

£18.99

Haruki Murakami's myriad fans will be delighted by this unique look into the mind of a master storyteller. In this engaging book, the internationally best-selling author and famously reclusive writer shares with readers what he thinks about being a novelist; his thoughts on the role of the novel in our society; his own origins as a writer; and his musings on the sparks of creativity that inspire other writers, artists, and musicians. Readers who have long wondered where the mysterious novelist gets his ideas and what inspires his strangely surreal worlds will be fascinated by this highly personal look at the craft of writing.

unique voice has to create change. Whether it's a novel, personal essay, non-fiction work or short story - or even just the formless desire to write something - Your Story Matters will hone your skill and help you along the way. This book includes exercises and prompts that will develop your idea, no matter what genre you're writing in. It is practical, to the point and focused on letting you figure out what you want to write, how you want to write and why this is the best use of your voice. Accessible and thought-provoking, it will inspire you to keep thinking about writing, even when you don't have the time to put pen to paper.



### Grayson's Art Club Grayson Perry

£15

During lockdown, Grayson Perry, brought the nation together through art, helping them to unleash their creativity as part of his Channel 4 TV series. Every week he hosted the show from his own studio - taking the country with him as he created his own new art works.

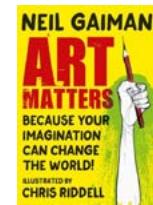
A key element of the series was Grayson asking members of the public to send him their own artworks which they had been making at home, talking to them via video calls and choosing his favourite artworks. The variety of entries showed the imagination, skill and creativity of the nation. These works, alongside those of Grayson Perry, Philippa Perry and the invited artists and celebrities, are collected here to catalogue the exhibition at Manchester Art Gallery.



### Your Story Matters Shukla, Nikesh

£9.99

Nikesh Shukla knows better than most the power that every

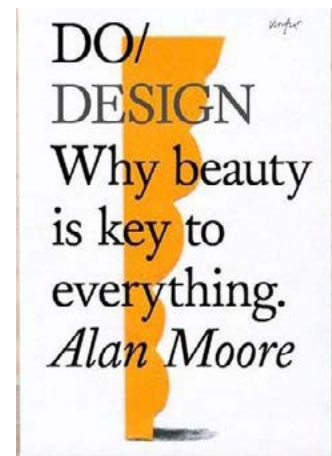


### Art Matters Neil Gaiman

£7.99

Neil Gaiman once said that 'the world always seems brighter when you've

just made something that wasn't there before'. This little book is the embodiment of that vision. Drawn together from speeches, poems and creative manifestos, Art Matters explores how reading, imagining and creating can change the world, and will be inspirational to young and old.



### Do/Design

Why beauty is key to everything  
Alan Moore

£9.99

From the 'Do' range of books covering a wide range of subjects including Story / Improve/Disrupt. Designer Alan Moore invites us to rethink not only what we produce - whether it's a website, a handmade chair, or a business - but how and why. With examples from Apple, Yeo Valley and Blitz Motorcycles, we are encouraged to ask: is it useful and considered? Is it a thing of beauty?





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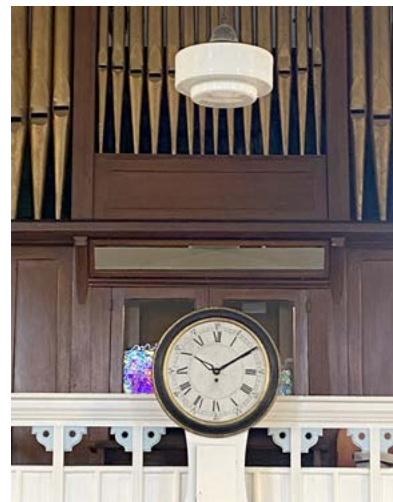
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Images credit: Helen, Jk, Morgan



# Open Doors

*Next month a plethora of historic sites, landmarks and hidden gems will offer free entry, events or guided tours. Helen Morgan from Abergavenny Local History Society reports.*

**They are part of Open Doors — Wales's contribution to the annual European Heritage Days initiative which invites heritage organisations, private owners, local authorities and others to open interesting places to the public free of charge. <https://cadw.gov.wales/visit/whats-on/open-doors-events>**

In Abergavenny the United Reformed Church is opening its doors during the Food Festival. This Georgian Grade 2 listed chapel features an 1860s tracker action organ, and on the open day will have organ recitals, charity stalls, a display describing the history of the chapel and a bee-friendly garden. The story of the chapel, however, begins in 1690 when an Independent Chapel was

built in Cross Street, where the Great George now stands. This followed the Toleration Act of 1689 allowing non-conformists to build places of worship (although they were still banned from holding public office). At this time, Nonconformity and Dissent were active in Abergavenny. When the congregation grew, it moved to Castle Street in 1707, to what was later The Manse. The congregation continued to grow and by 1773 had reached 400. Bigger premises were needed and the Georgian chapel that is still here today was completed in 1794. The clock, presented by W Dinwoodie in 1709 was installed in the new building below the organ. Other architectural features of note include the iron pillars, similar to those in Market Street. Flanking the pulpit are two colourful stained glass windows commemorating Elizabeth Jenkins (1871) and John Jenkins (1867) who ran a greengrocer's shop in what is now Flannel Street. At the centre of the pulpit is the Bardic Chair, won by John Owen y Fenni at the National Eisteddfod in Brynmawr in 1894. Originally from Dolgellau, he moved here in 1887 to work as a

composer for Henry Sergeant and adopted the Bardic suffix. He bought the MInerva Press in Neville Street in 1897 which became a meeting place for the Welsh speaking community. He was awarded an OBE in 1950.

Upstairs are the balconies from which the Victorian pews below can be viewed and compared with the (possibly) original pews. You can also see the art deco hanging lamps that, like the bricks, mortar and interior, are listed but cannot be rewired because the ceiling is too fragile.

*The United Reformed Church is open 10am-4pm on September 16th. History lectures resume on September 20th. For details see [abergavennylocalhistorysociety.org.uk](http://abergavennylocalhistorysociety.org.uk)*





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# PUZZLES SPOT THE DIFFERENCE



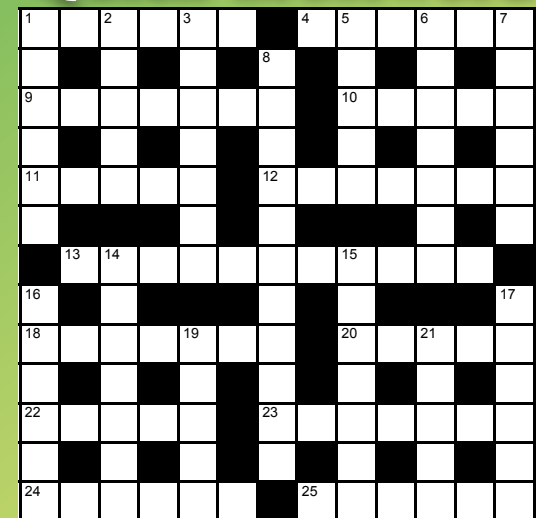
### ACROSS

- 1 Deprive of food (6)
- 4 Scribble (6)
- 9 Complicated (7)
- 10 Meal of raw vegetables (5)
- 11 Additional (5)
- 12 Exactly alike (7)
- 13 Meeting (11)
- 18 Down-payment (7)
- 20 End of day (5)
- 22 Type of oil (5)
- 23 Result (7)
- 24 Process (6)
- 25 Holds firmly (6)

### DOWN

- 1 Private (6)
- 2 Allow to enter (5)
- 3 Krakatoa (7)
- 5 Beginning (5)
- 6 Sea mammal (7)
- 7 Not youngest (6)
- 8 Test (11)
- 14 Young dogs (7)
- 15 Hideous beast (7)
- 16 Fools (6)
- 17 Speaks (6)
- 19 Kind of turnip (5)
- 21 Increases in size (5)

## Quick Crossword



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## Next Month's Focus

Next month's Focus will celebrate food and drink, so if you have a business that you would like to feature, please get in contact!

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