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Dear Readers,



I hope you are keeping well. It's been a tough month for me personally; visiting a friend who has come to the end of her life, being laid low with Covid for a number of weeks and, more recently, having to cope with the stress of our dog Cosmo becoming very poorly. It's at times like these when home and what it represents becomes very important to me. It is my safe space, my haven, somewhere where I can be myself, rest, recharge and, if need be, hide from the outside world.

Recently my daughter asked me to name my favourite season. All of them have their merits of course, but I tend towards liking the colder months and especially autumn. When I lived in Australia I definitely enjoyed the year round sunshine and months of warmth, but I did miss the autumns and winters of the northern hemisphere. In this month's magazine we're truly embracing autumn and winter and the shift towards the colder weather and darker days. This time of year need not be depressing; there's a lot of comfort to be found and this month we're unearthing ways and means to truly make the most of the season and invite some seasonal cosiness as well as looking a little further ahead towards Christmas.

The magazine, this month, is best enjoyed with something warming to drink and a snugly blanket. I do hope you will enjoy it.

Best Wishes,

Hannah

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Bloomin' Brilliant!



The Britain in Bloom judges inspect the beautiful floral displays in town

At the end of October, members from various community groups in Abergavenny headed to Lindley Hall in Westminster for the Awards Ceremony to announce the winners in the annual Britain in Bloom Awards.

Abergavenny was a first time Britain in Bloom participant and had entered the 'Town' category in high spirits, acknowledging the tough competition between them and their fellow finalists. Although they didn't clinch the top spot, Abergavenny in Bloom received a coveted Gold award.

The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) judges recognised the exceptional work put into Abergavenny in Bloom and awarded them the Sustainable Gardening Award for embracing innovation through smart tech and creative planting schemes,

with Britain in Bloom describing their efforts as going 'above and beyond to protect the environment.'

Programmes included: a Citizen Science project carried out by volunteers and school children to monitor pollinator biodiversity, resulting in rare orchids and a black oil beetle being recorded; and an initiative piloting the use of smart technology to help tackle watering challenges.

Moisture sensors were fitted in beds and planters around the town centre, to detect when plants need water or other nutrients, and to ensure optimum conditions for growing. This information is then accessed via an online gateway, meaning water won't be wasted and volunteers will know exactly when to water them. Additionally, water butts are being installed piloting rainwater

collection from commercial premises to assist with the watering of planters.

Mariko, Paddy, Tony, Judith, and Sandra were incredibly humbled and honoured to represent Abergavenny in Bloom at this prestigious event. Huge congratulations to those volunteers and contributors in this remarkable journey and for making Abergavenny a beautiful and vibrant place to call home.

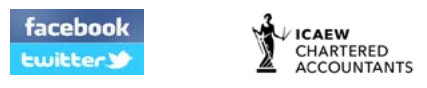


Mariko, Paddy, Tony, Judith, and Sandra represented Abergavenny in Bloom at the event

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The Gathering



Ever since the announcement that Tudor Day Street Centre in Abergavenny would be knocked down, there has been a strong campaign in which protesters have voiced their concerns about these plans. For a long time Tudor Street Day Centre has been a much loved building that supported adults with learning difficulties and mental health issues.

The most recent scheme at Tudor Street was run by Monmouthshire County Council, but there are now plans to move this to another venue. As a result

of the campaign to protect the most accessible venue for adults with learning difficulties and mental health issues, Cllr Ian Chandler, Head of Social Care, has spoken publicly about establishing a community group in Tudor Street run by some of the campaigners themselves.

One of the main campaigners and secretary of the community group known as The Gathering, is Sarah Griffiths (see pictured) who used to attend Tudor Street as part of My day My Life which is the name of the MCC scheme that now only caters for a smaller number of service users.

Sarah Griffiths and some of her campaigners have set up The Gathering, a community group aimed at all vulnerable people and others in the community to come and socialise, engage in activities and access vocational and training opportunities.

Owen B Lewis from The Gathering says 'The community group wants to include anyone who is vulnerable, which means it needs to be accessible for people with complex physical disabilities. There is nowhere else for them to go in Abergavenny. They need somewhere, and Tudor Street is the most fit-for-purpose building. Our amazing committee members are working on a business plan supported by Gavo. The problem, however, is the time it will take to obtain funding. As a result, and while we develop our business plan and apply for grants, we have set up a crowdfunding page in the hope that the community will get behind us and show the council that we are ready - with funds - to build our community group in order to support the most vulnerable. Please see our link for more information.

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Owen Lewis



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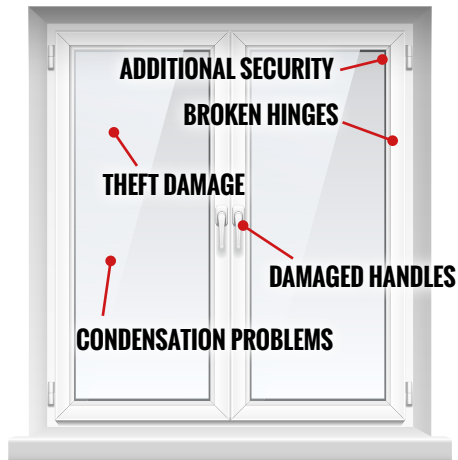
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Reflections On Linda Vista Gardens



In his next installment of our 'Reflection On' series, Tony Hopkins takes us on a wander through Linda Vista Gardens

Easily accessible from the town centre, Linda Vista Gardens is an Abergavenny treasure. The house enjoys a commanding view of the Gardens and Castle Meadows, the Blorenge dominating the background.

Frederick Jenkins - humbly born in Chicken Street nearly 200 years ago - successfully sought his fortune with his brothers as a builder in Chile, returning in the 1860s. He built Linda Vista House in 1875 but, sadly soon died in his mid-forties in 1878. Bought by Major Whitehead a local ironmaster in 1911, he later married Violet, scioness of an Irish family with an impressive horticultural pedigree. She brought the gardens to maturity and, on her demise in 1957, the local council took the property over: the Gardens thus became available to all.



Monkey Puzzle cones

Private and public stewardship has resulted in a public domain of 5 acres with formal gardens descending from the house. Native and exotic bushes, herbs and flowering ground plants are arranged in ways that invite leisurely exploration. Flowering trees, blooms and bushes feature amongst rockeries, a pond, and terraces. These reflect a formal Victorian approach to the gardens.

Below and beyond this area spreads a range of trees, bushes and open areas including a bog garden and woodland glade. Impressive evergreens - conifers, spruces, and pines - are to be seen as well as oaks, hornbeams and, in season, grotesque medlar fruits. The diameters of some trees suggest they were planted about a hundred years ago. Of note is a Ginkgo, native to China and often referred to as a living fossil. The oldest surviving tree species, it evolved about 350 million years ago. Near the house, are two other stately trees, an evergreen Holm Oak, and a London Plane, each about 150 years old.

From 1957 the local authorities extended the area south-west of the house. It features native and exotic trees including oaks, beeches, sweet chestnuts, a Dawn Redwood, a Monkey tree, assorted cherry trees, an Indian

Bean Tree, and a Foxglove tree. The latter was cut down but clings to life - suckers with leaves have sprung from its underground roots, a veritable ghost tree! All have interesting stories to tell: the sweet chestnuts possibly date back to the Romans who first brought these trees to Britain. Behind the tearooms towers the Garden's oldest tree - a beech some 250 years old.



A resident of Linda Vista Gardens

Home gardeners are attracted to the collection in the Arboretum. About two dozen assorted and colorful smaller trees have been planted over the last decade: they highlight trees suited to home gardens. This feature reflects the far sightedness shown and the hard work done by the Friends of Linda Vista Gardens. Established fifteen years ago, this band of volunteers do the maintenance work once done by up to three full-time gardeners, and initiate events and horticultural developments. Such efforts are a key to the Gardens' survival.

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Be Wary of Christmas Cons

With Christmas approaching we are advising online shoppers how to spot a scam and avoid falling prey to them.

Q - "I do most of my shopping online. I am always on the lookout for a bargain, especially with the festive season coming up but I'm worried about scammers. What should I look for, to avoid getting caught out?"

Citizens Advice says: You're not alone, lots of people do their shopping online these days, it's convenient and can save you time. But as more and more of us move online, so are scammers, with their tactics becoming more sophisticated all the time.

While scams can be tricky to recognise there are always things you can look out for and steps you can take to protect yourself from falling foul to a scammer. The golden rule to remember is that if it seems too good to be true then it probably is. This goes for products which are 'must-haves', are sold out at major retailers, or are heavily discounted.

If you're buying from a site you haven't used before, do some

research before hitting buy. Find the company's return and refund policies so you know your rights if something goes wrong with your purchase. You should also look up the company's address, this can normally be found in the website's 'contact us' section and should have a street name, not just a post office box.

Also take some time to see what other people have said about the website. Start with an internet search and look at different review websites, don't rely on reviews the company has put on its own website.

Be very wary of people contacting you out of the blue on social media or via text and email offering an item for sale or deal on something. And scammers will often ask you to pay in unusual ways, or put you under pressure to buy very quickly. For example, they'll ask you to send money through a transfer service like MoneyGram or Western Union or pay via vouchers.

If you do fall victim to a scam, firstly don't feel embarrassed or ashamed. Scammers are clever and regularly adapt their methods making them harder to spot. Anyone can get scammed.

Secondly, do report it, this alerts authorities to scammers' techniques and prevents others from being taken advantage of. You can report a scam to Citizens Advice or Action Fraud.

If you've transferred money in the last 24 hours contact the police via the non-emergency number 101, however if you feel unsafe use 999. Also contact your bank to let them know you've transferred money, you should still do this if 24 hours have passed.

You can find out more about your rights via the Citizens Advice consumer advice pages or by contacting our Consumer Helpline if you need more help.

Citizens Advice



Abergavenny Community Centre

In 2006 some residents saw a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to repurpose an empty building for community use. In 2015 the doors of Abergavenny Community Centre opened and now it is a multi-purpose building available to the whole community.



Former Park Street Infant School



Things to do

- Friday Coffee Morning
- Wednesday Lunch Club
- Friday Lunch
- Singing (just for fun)
- Toddler Group
- Monthly Sunday Tea and Chat
- Table Tennis
- Friday Knitting Club
- Dementia Friendship Cafe
- Keeping up with technology
- Arts and Crafts
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- Chair Yoga
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- Youth Development opportunities
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Community initiatives

Apple pressing days, 'The Big Lunch' (June), 'Repair Cafe', litter-picking hub and 'Library of Things'.

Health and well-being

A host of activities, e.g. dance, fitness, yoga, art and meditation are offered by others, and self-help groups.



A defibrillator is mounted at the Park Street entrance for public access

Printed November 2023

About us

How we got here:

- 2006: 'The future is local' campaign began
- 2015: Three year lease granted
- 2018: Charitable status achieved
- 2021: Twenty-Five year lease granted

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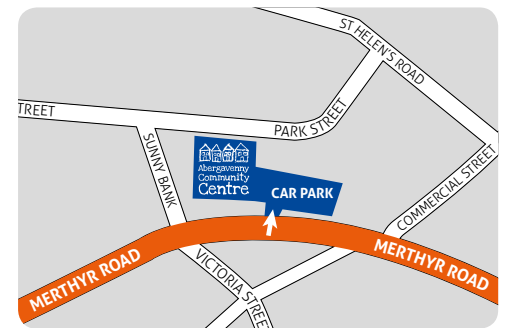
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Join Abergavenny Amateur Operatic and Dramatic Society (AAODS) as their junior section perform 'Elf the Musical' this December. Based on the beloved holiday film, this hilarious Christmas comedy follows Buddy the Elf in his quest to find his true identity.

The cast of 27 children have been rehearsing since August this year and are excited to share the show with audiences from Tuesday 12th to Saturday 16th of December in Clarence Hall, Crickhowell. Tickets can be purchased online via Ticketsource or by scanning the QR code on the poster.

Tansy Newsam (Buddy) and Rachel Taylor (Jovie) make their principal debuts alongside Molly Hall (Michael), Olivia O'Gorman (Emily) and Cam Mathias (Walter). They are supported by a strong cast of excitable elves and those trying to navigate Christmastime in New York City. Tom Mogford, Meg Trinder and Alys Le Moignan-Williams form the creative team for this production who hope to transform a well-loved local venue into a Christmas grotto fit for a festive extravaganza! The team said 'We are so proud of this cast for their hard work in bringing the Christmas magic alive onstage in their performances.'



Rehearsing Christmas numbers in August has been an interesting experience but the children have exceeded our expectations and we can't wait to showcase their talent to our audiences!

This modern day holiday classic is sure to make everyone embrace their inner elf and provides the perfect opportunity to start your family festivities by supporting local theatre. After all, the best way to spread Christmas Cheer is singing loud for all to hear!

Meg Trinder

AAODS JUNIORS PRESENT



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To book your place: Email: Lou Seabourne; lou.seabourne@yahoo.com Tel: 07790 166943 Or Pam Wesson at 'So Artrageous' Art and Craft Studio Tel: 078235 17547

'I was unsure what to draw or paint, or if I would be any good. As I had not done any art since school. But Lou helped me find my creative flow and I now feel inspired to continue painting. I would highly recommend for anyone interested in art or looking to dive into a creative adventure'

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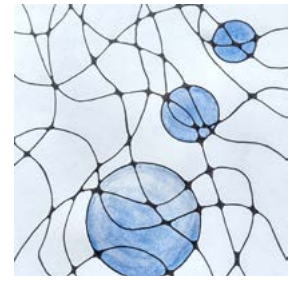
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So Artrageous!



Art & Craft Studio So Artrageous! has recently relocated to an easier to find space in Lulworth House, Monk Street, Abergavenny and some exciting things are happening.

Art On The Stairs - monthly exhibits from local artists. If you are a local artist who would like to hire this space to display your work please get in touch.

The Wastenottery - carries Textile Art & crafts made predominantly using recycled materials plus a range of salvaged craft materials for sale.

Being a committed recycler & hating to see waste, rescuing resources is my mission. Stock is sourced from dead stock, gathered freely, salvaged or saved from landfill and is ready to pass on at a reasonable cost to anyone who needs it.

So any charity crafters, craft groups, playgroups, schools etc come along and see what is in the 'mini scrapstore'. You never know what you might find in the Wastenottery!

Also proudly on display in The Wastenottery is 'The New Quilt of Humanity'; the community Stop & Stitch lockdown project, which was contributed to by many local people as well as Facebook members & friends from further afield.

The Studio is available for hire for full or half day workshops, group meetings etc.

So if you are a craftsperson/artist who would like to run workshops please get in touch.

The first workshop in the new Studio will be on 18th November with local Artist Lou Seabourne who works in digital & acrylics. Lou will take you from a 'Glimmer to a Glow' building your confidence and guiding you to find your unique style as an artist.

So Artrageous!

Art & Craft Studio

Art On The Stairs
Exhibits from local artists.

The Wastenottery
Textile art & crafts made using recycled materials plus a range of salvaged craft materials for sale.

The Studio
Available for hire for full or half day workshops, group meetings, etc.

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Lulworth House, 30 Monk Street, Abergavenny, NP7 5NP

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November 18th & 19th

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The Makers at Craft Renaissance
near the Chainbridge Inn NP15 1JU

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THE LONGEST RUNNING FILM SOCIETY IN WALES

1 st Nov	The Gravedigger's Wife
15 th Nov	All the Beauty and the Bloodshed
29 th Nov	Close

Doors 4pm for 4:30pm screening and 7pm for 7:30pm screening.
Melville Centre, Pen-y-Pound, Abergavenny NP7 5UD
Limited number of seats for non-members aged 18+ @£5 per person (Cash only)
www.abergavennyfilmsociety.com

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NOVEMBER EVENTS CALENDAR

SATURDAY 4TH NOVEMBER FUNDRAISING SALE

Second hand sale raising money for various charities
12pm-3pm, Grosmont Church nave

SUNDAY 5TH NOVEMBER REMEMBRANCE SERVICE

Raffle afterwards, tea, coffee & refreshments
2pm-4pm, Llanfoist Chapel of Peace, Llanfoist Cemetery

SUNDAY 5TH NOVEMBER Abergavenny Roundtable FIREWORKS SPOOKTACULAR 2023



Get ready for a night to remember as we light up the skies above Abergavenny with a dazzling array of colours! We have 2 displays lined up for you! The first is a quieter, mini display suitable for smaller children and those with additional needs. The second, is our amazing pyromusical display which is choreographed to a spooky soundtrack, accompanied by a fantastic light show! A general admission ticket will allow you to see either or both displays. There's

food and drinks, light up toys and a small funfair for the kids.

All proceeds will go to charities and good causes in the local area. *Adults £8 - Kids £5 - Gates open at 5:00pm*
Short mini display, suitable for young children and those with additional needs at 6pm Main display at 7pm sharp! For Tickets please visit Abergavenny Round Table on Facebook and follow links to the Eventbrite Page for ticket purchases

TUESDAY 7TH (AND EVERY TUESDAY) CRAFTING 4 CANCER

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

TUESDAY 7TH NOVEMBER ABERGAVENTNY/Y FENNI WI MONTHLY AFTERNOON MEETING

1st Tuesday of every month. Guest speakers. Learn and forge new friendships This month: Guest Speaker, Peter Martin from Swan Rescue South Wales (originally Gwent Swan Rescue). The only swan rescue group in South Wales.
2pm-4pm, The Methodist Church Hall, Castle St, Abergavenny

WEDNESDAY 8TH NOVEMBER GOVILON WI

November's meet up will include an autumn floral demonstration
7.30pm at Salisbury Hall Govilon. All are welcome.

FRIDAY 10TH NOVEMBER Llanfoist Village Hall Film Night THE UNLIKELY PILGRIMAGE OF HAROLD FRY

Harold is an ordinary man who has passed through life, living on the side lines, until he goes to post a letter one day...and just keeps walking. Door 7pm, Film starts 7.30pm, Bar available. Tickets £5 for adults, £3 for children on the door
Llanfoist Village Hall, Church Lane, Llanfoist

FRIDAY 10TH NOVEMBER Book-ish Author Event NINA STIBBE: WENT TO LONDON, TOOK THE DOG

Tickets £6 or £17 with book
7.30pm, Book-ish Loft, Book-ish, Crickhowell
www.book-ish.co.uk/events

SATURDAY 11TH NOVEMBER HARDY PLANT SOCIETY MONMOUTHSHIRE

Laura Willgoss with an illustrated talk 'Developing Wildegoose Nursery' the story of restoring an abandoned nursery in a walled garden into an organic plant nursery, now with a flourishing and expanding range of perennials and grasses. 2.30pm, Little Mill Village Hall, NP4 0HJ

WEDNESDAY 15TH NOVEMBER Abergavenny Film Society ALL THE BEAUTY AND THE BLOODSHED

The film examines the life and career of photographer and activist Nan Goldin and her efforts to hold Purdue Pharma, owned by the Sackler family, accountable for the opioid epidemic. Screenings at 4.30pm and 7.30pm, Melville Centre, Penypound, Abergavenny
See Page 24

THURSDAY 16TH NOVEMBER Book-ish Author Event DIANA HENRY: ROAST FIGS, SUGAR, SNOW – FOOD TO WARM THE SOUL



Tickets £11 or £22 with book
7.30pm, Angel Hotel, Abergavenny
www.book-ish.co.uk/events

CONTINUED OVERLEAF..

the Court Cupboard

Craft Gallery

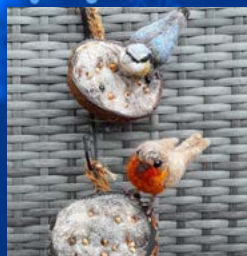


Welcome to Christmas at the Court Cupboard Gallery

Celebrate 26 years of creativity with the members of the Black Mountains Circle Co-operative with mulled wine and home-made mince pies. Saturday 25th November and Sunday 26th November, 11am to 5pm.

20% off all purchases

Enjoy our special exhibition of new work by our members.



Sadly, after Christmas, we are having to leave the lovely old barn that is the Court Cupboard but we will continue as the **Black Mountain Circle** and are hoping to find new premises very soon.

New Court Farm, Llantilio Pertholey, Abergavenny, NP7 8AU

01873 852011 www.courtcupboardgallery.co.uk [f /courtcupboard](https://www.facebook.com/courtcupboard)

SATURDAY 18TH NOVEMBER ART WORKSHOP WITH LOU SEABOURNE

See Page 22 for information and ways to book

SATURDAY 18TH NOVEMBER CHRISTMAS LIGHT SWITCH-ON

Santa Claus is coming to town on the 18th of November, bringing loads of festive cheer. He'll be making stops throughout our amazing town with wonderful live entertainment at each one. From 3pm, Abergavenny Town Centre. More info Facebook @Abergavenny Town Council

SATURDAY 18TH NOVEMBER REPAIR CAFÉ ABERGAVENNY



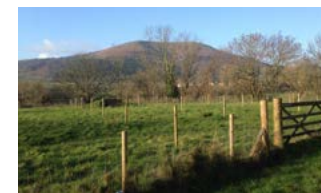
We repair household items including toasters, vacuum cleaners, printers, electronic items, electric lawnmowers, manual bicycles (safety check), strimmers (sorry no microwaves), basic sewing, sewing machines etc – jewellery, woodwork and sharpening by appointment only. Book or just turn up. Labour free (donations welcome) – parts are not supplied. The object is to keep repairable items out of landfill.

11am-2pm, Abergavenny Community Centre, Merthyr Rd, Abergavenny

SUNDAY 19TH NOVEMBER NOVEMBER MAINTENANCE PARTY – ABERGAVENNY COMMUNITY ORCHARD

Call out for helpers! We'll be holding a work party in the orchard and the more the merrier. Jobs to be done include tidying, litter picking,

bramble management, weeding and pond maintenance. Please bring practical and protective clothing such as thick gardening gloves, and tools like secateurs, choppers, strimmers and loppers. The more the merrier - it's a really nice social get together and tea coffee and biscuits will definitely be involved. 10:30am-2pm, Community Orchard, Mill St, Abergavenny



SUNDAY 19TH NOVEMBER ABERGAVENNY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA AUTUMN CONCERT

2:30pm, Our Lady & St Michael's RC Church, Abergavenny. More info abergavennysymph.org.uk

WEDNESDAY 22ND NOVEMBER ABERGAVENNY LOCAL HISTORY TALK



7:30pm, Melville Theatre & Zoom. See Page 57 for more info

THURSDAY 23RD NOVEMBER Book-ish Author Event GAIL MULLER: DO/HOPE/WHY YOU SHOULD NEVER GIVE UP

Tickets £7 or £15 with book. 7.30pm, Book-ish Loft, Book-ish, Crickhowell. www.book-ish.co.uk/events

WEDNESDAY 29TH NOVEMBER ABERGAVENNY/Y FENNI WI AFTERNOON TEA

Last Wednesday of every month, with musical entertainment. 2pm-4pm, The Methodist Church Hall, Castle St, Abergavenny

EVENTS

WEDNESDAY 29TH NOVEMBER Abergavenny Film Society CLOSE (12A)



This French film won the Grand Prix in Cannes in 2022 and is a powerful, poetic study of youth. It focuses on two boys whose friendship is challenged as they enter adolescence. Pressures from schoolmates add to their distress and the consequences are devastating. This film is likely to be upsetting but its themes are important and very well portrayed. Screenings at 4.30pm and 7.30pm Melville Centre, Penypound, Abergavenny. See Page 24

THURSDAY 30TH NOVEMBER Book-ish Author Event NICOLA EDWARDS: THIS THING OF DARKNESS

Tickets £7 or £12 with book. 7.30pm, Book-ish Loft, Book-ish, Crickhowell. www.book-ish.co.uk/events

Looking Ahead

12TH-16TH DECEMBER AAODS JUNIORS PERFORMS ELF JR. THE MUSICAL

7pm, Clarence Hall, Crickhowell. See our article on Page 11

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Dance Blast invites Young Men and Boys to come and Dance



Our classes for Boys & Young Men include all male identifying young people. Dance Blast is a Community Arts organisation for everyone.

We realise it can be difficult to join a dance class that is attended predominately by girls or young women. For this reason, every Monday evening at The Dance Centre (termtime), we have classes specifically for boys & young men, led by male dancers.

The main class tutor is Liam Wallace, an experienced, Wales based dancer who trained at Northern School of Contemporary Dance. In addition to Liam, our dancers have recently enjoyed classes with Harlan Rust and Jules Young.

There are many reasons why it is good to dance. Apart from being great fun, it improves your strength & fitness and makes you feel good. It is a wonderful creative and physical activity to enjoy with friends.

If you take to dance, you may progress to joining Monmouthshire Youth Dance Company (MYDC). We currently have two boys in MYDC who have worked with professional choreographers from across the UK. In recent years male dancers from MYDC have gone

on to train at Northern School of Contemporary Dance in Leeds, Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts and Performers College in London.

If you know a boy or young man who would like to dance then please tell them about Boys Dance at Dance Blast.

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact us at **E:** danceblastclasses@gmail.com **T:** 01873 854811 **W:** www.dance-blast.org

Dance Blast is a centre for Dance and Aerial Circus. With over 40 classes to choose from for all ages and abilities and a range of styles, there is something for everyone. Scan the QR code or Go to www.dance-blast.org/ timetables to see our full timetable

Dance Blast
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 Igniting the desire to dance

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 Juniors 3.45pm to 4.45pm
 Youth 5pm to 6pm

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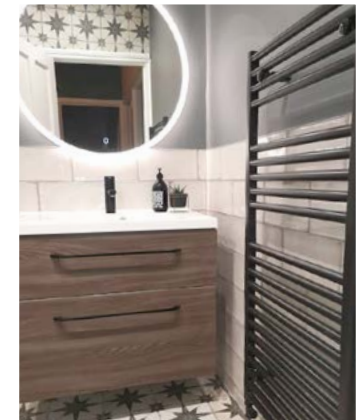
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Finding Cosy

don't know about you, but I struggle to find my mojo on cold, wet evenings to go outside in the dark or leave a warm house to go to an exercise class. One option may be to buy a house with a gym or convert an outbuilding, but as someone who prefers to exercise outdoors, I think this would be throwing money away. The temptation is to sit in front of the fire, wearing pyjamas and Ugg boots, hot chocolate in hand and watch whatever is on television. I find the less I do, the less motivated I become so I have to make a concerted effort to rise very early every morning to walk the dogs across the fields and go to the gym a couple of mornings a week. The dogs are walked a little later at the weekends, I love seeing the autumn colours and there is nothing to beat a crisp, autumn morning with the sun rising.



I love the feeling of shutting myself away from the wind and rain and hunkering down. The Danish use the term 'hygge' which has become very well known in recent years, a concept related to finding comfort, pleasure and warmth. Hygge interiors and way of life is often written about in interior magazines - a Danish friend once told me she changes her curtains twice a year, once for spring/summer fabrics and the other for warmer, wool based fabrics for the autumn winter.

What makes a house feel cosy? Small rather than large rooms? Squishy sofas with large cushions? A 'real' fire? Virtually every home I visit has a feature fireplace, whether that be an inglenook stone fireplace, a woodburning stove set on a hearth or a modern wall mounted gas fire. It becomes the focal point of a room - the look of it, the feeling of warmth it provides is incomparable and a room without a fire just doesn't seem so cosy during the darker winter months.

Wood burning stoves have become very popular. Often, even if a house does not have a log burning stove, a viewer will ask if one can be fitted, especially in period properties but it is becoming more fashionable in modern houses too. There has been some controversy around emissions from wood burnings stoves and since 2022 stoves have to meet environmental standards. We always recommend to a prospective buyer that they source a HETAS qualified stove installer, as part of the sales process, a HETAS certificate is more often than not required.

Aside from indoor fires, November brings us Bonfire Night. It's an opportunity to stand around a large fire on a cold evening, watching the flames and enjoying comforting food and, for children, toasting marshmallows while the adults mingh indulge in a winter's punch.

Most towns have organised Bonfire Night events which ensures that the fun of watching a fire can be done safely.

I thought I would share with you some photos of the fantastic fires and fireplaces from properties we have sold or are marketing - these are sure to remind you of a cosy evening, even if you don't have one in your own home.

Heather Cook

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Comfort in a Cup

When the weather is cold, rainy and autumnal outside, there is little else more comforting than a soothing drink. Not only will it warm you from within, but the mug acts as a perfect handwarmer too. Naturally a bog standard cup of tea sipped and fully appreciated is just as good as any of the recipes here, and has its place rightfully as one of the nation's favourite drinks, but if you fancy taking a little time to mindfully prepare a warm and cosy beverage, here are some ideas we think you might enjoy.

All recipes can be substituted using milk alternatives and vegan syrups in place of honey. Each recipe makes one mug.



Mulled Apple Juice

**250ml apple juice
Strips of orange peel
½ cinnamon stick
1 clove**

Sugar or honey (optional to taste)

Simmer the apple juice with the strips of orange peel, cinnamon stick and clove for 5-10 minutes until the flavours have infused. Sweeten to taste. Serve your drink with a little orange peel and a cinnamon stick if you like.



Honey Rose Cocoa

**Cocoa or hot chocolate
Rose water
Honey or maple syrup
Pinch salt**

Prepare hot chocolate or cocoa according to packet instructions for the preparation of one cup

Add ½ to 1 tsp of rosewater to taste. If using cocoa, add honey or maple syrup to sweeten and a pinch of salt which will enhance the flavour. Stir to combine. Can be served with squirty cream or whipped coconut cream and edible rose petals for a touch of luxury



Pumpkin Spice Latte

**2tsp Pumpkin puree
Pinch ground cinnamon
Pinch ground ginger
Pinch ground nutmeg
30ml espresso or strong coffee
250 ml milk/milk alternative**

Place puree in a large mug, stir in the spices, add the espresso or strong coffee.

Heat the milk in a pan until steaming and frothy. Pour into mug, spoon over any froth. Stir to combine. Add squirty cream for indulgence and sprinkle with cinnamon.



Vanilla Tea

**½ tsp Vanilla bean paste
Black tea or herbal tea**

Simply brew good quality black tea and add ½ tsp of vanilla bean paste to your mug after steeping your tea. Add milk and sugar as preferred.

Alternatively, if using loose leaf tea, buy a vanilla pod, scrape out the pods and cut them into small pieces, adding them to the tea container. Make tea as you normally would, and it will be delicately perfumed with the heady scent and taste of vanilla.

WE ARE THRILLED TO PRESENT OUR CHRISTMAS MENU AVAILABLE FROM 15TH NOVEMBER. IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY TO TAKE A LOOK AND PRE-BOOK WITH US.

Goat Cheese Salad (v)

Baby leaf salad with walnuts, cherry tomatoes, goats cheese and honey

Beef Carpaccio (gf)

Paper thin sliced beef fillet marinated with capers, olive oil, fresh lemon juice and shaved parmesan

Antipasto Misto (gf)

Selection of Italian cheese and Italian prosciutto served with pickles, rocket salad and crackers

Tomato Caprese (v)

Beef tomato stuffed with burrata, homemade pesto and fresh herbs, baked in the oven and served on a bed of rocket

Brandy King Prawns (gf)

Pan fried king prawns with garlic, chilli and fresh herbs in a creamy brandy sauce. Served with homemade bread

Butternut Squash Soup (v) (gf) (vg)

Creamy soup with butternut squash, white onion, carrots, fresh herbs, vegan cream and sage vegan butter. Served with homemade bread

Salmone al Miele

Salmon fillet marinated in honey, soy sauce, lemon juice and thyme served with roast vegetables and coriander brandy creamy sauce

Pizza Gamberi e Avocado

Pizza with brandy gorgonzola cream, baby shrimp, rocket salad, cherry tomatoes and avocado

Beef Short Rib (gf)

Slow oven-cooked beef short rib in red wine, white onion and fresh herbs. Served with homemade mash potato and homemade gravy

Lobster Tortelloni

Homemade Tortelloni pasta filled with fresh lobster meat and fresh herbs, cooked in a creamy tomato, sambuca and sage sauce

Tortelli al Cinghiale

Homemade Tortelli pasta filled with wild boar meat and fresh herbs. Served with a salad of radicchio, walnuts, brie and a touch of cream

Butternut Squash Risotto (gf) (v) (vg)

Creamy risotto cooked with creamy butternut squash

Porchetta (gf)

Rolled pork belly stuffed with delicious fresh herbs: Italian fennel, chilli flakes and fresh coriander. Served with homemade mashed potato and homemade gravy

QUAGLIA AL FORNO (gf)

Oven roasted 1/2 poussin stuffed with Italian pork sausage, herbs, red onion and chestnuts. Served with homemade mashed potato and homemade gravy



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Comforting Rituals for Cosiness and Peace

The nights are drawing in. How can you preserve your sense of inner peace and seek calm and comfort during the depths of winter? Read on for some ideas inspired by the practices of our Nordic neighbours.



Get Closer to Nature

It's well known that being in nature can help reduce stress and anxiety, but that doesn't mean you have to go to a forest, mountain, or beach. If you have a garden, just go outside,

take your shoes off, and do some deep breathing. Notice the change in temperature of the air that you're breathing in and out when you're outside compared to when you are indoors. Consider being outside at different times of the day. The quiet of the dawn hours can be both peaceful and uplifting, while stargazing on a clear crisp night can inspire a sense of awe and place.



Live in the Present

There are a certain number of activities that we do as part of daily our routine; things like eating, walking, or doing chores. Often we don't even notice them. Try

embracing these activities and immersing yourself in the experience. When making your morning cup of coffee, for example, select your favourite cup and take time to inhale the coffee and experience its comforting aroma. Notice your surroundings. Engage all your senses and observe how these small acts can induce a sense of inner peace.



Seek Human Connection

During the darker months of the year, we tend to want to retreat and hibernate, but spending time with friends and family can be an enriching experience. If you can't do

that daily or even very regularly, perhaps just consider taking a mindful break during your working day - it doesn't need to be for long - to chat and connect with a friend or work colleague. If there's time, share a cuppa together. In Sweden this is known as Fika and is a daily practice for many. Notice how this makes you feel and the gratitude you may experience through connecting with others.



Get Better Sleep

The colder temperatures at this time of year, combined with fewer daylight hours can interfere with the body's circadian rhythms - your internal 'clock' that regulates everything from

energy, appetite and sleep patterns. Less sunlight suppresses melatonin, the hormone that lets you fall asleep with ease.

During the colder winter months, make preparing for bed one of your comfort rituals. Try taking a warm bath before bed and perhaps add some soothing or calming essential oils like lavender to the water. Do some deep breathing or meditation before bedtime and make sure you power down your laptop and mobile phone an hour before turning out the lights to allow your mind to disconnect from the day.

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Christmas Markets



During November and December there is a flurry of Winter and Festive Markets to enjoy locally. These markets are great places to find inspiration, to support local artists, crafters, makers and independent businesses as well as affording you the chance to soak up the festive atmosphere.

11th & 12th November

ARTISAN WINTER MARKET

Tretower Court, Crickhowell. NP8 1RF - 10am-4pm

18th November

ABERGAVENNY CHRISTMAS LIGHT SWITCH ON

Abergavenny Town Centre - 3pm onwards

25th November

LLANOVER CHRISTMAS CRACKER

10:30-4pm Llanover village Hall

25th & 26th November

HANDMADE CHRISTMAS MARKETS

St Mary's Priory, Abergavenny

26th November

ABERGAVENNY CHRISTMAS MARKET

Abergavenny Market Hall - 11am-4pm

30th November & 7th December

ABERGAVENNY GARDEN CENTRE CHRISTMAS MARKET

Church Lane, Llanfoist 3pm-8pm

2nd December

CHRISTMAS FAYRE

Pen-y-pound Stadium, Abergavenny - 3pm-7pm

2nd December

CRICKHOWELL VINTAGE, ANTIQUE & MAKERS MARKET

Clarence Hall, Crickhowell 10am-4pm

7th December

CRICKHOWELL CHRISTMAS MARKET

Crickhowell Town Centre 4pm-8pm

9th December

CHRISTMAS MARKET

9am-5pm
Various town locations: Market Hall, St John's Sq, Nevill St, Frogmore St, Cross St & Market St

9th December

CROSS ASH CHRISTMAS SHOPPING & SANTA'S GROTTO

Cross Ash Village Hall- 10am-5pm

10th December

ABERGAVENNY CHRISTMAS MARKET

Abergavenny Market Hall 11am-4pm

10th December

CHRISTMAS CRAFT FAIR

Clydach Village Hall - 12pm-4pm

21st December

ABERGAVENNY STREET FOOD AND CRAFT NIGHT MARKET

Abergavenny Market Hall 5pm-9pm

*Please note we do our best to provide accurate information, but please seek out further information on individual events for times, highlights and parking details as often these may change closer to the date.

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November Weather Outlook

by Jonathan Powell



Photo: Autumnal Llanfosit by Leanne Preece

Following an unseasonably warm period of weather at the start of October, followed by a brief cold snap before the rain arrived, it looks likely that November will offer a similar mix with temperatures again set to surprise. With December and indeed the start of winter beckoning, November will be quite a turbulent month, with an active Atlantic generating plenty of rain and strong winds. The amount of rain will give rise to flooding concerns, especially in already established vulnerable areas. This wet and windy scenario will be tempered by a blocking pattern whereby for a time, high pressure will stabilize affairs, leading to dry and sunny conditions by day, with under clear skies, a frost to be reckoned with by night. However, the penultimate month of the year does show a lean toward being milder than normal. November is expected to return the average with regard to rainfall, with temperatures above the average.

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As a company, we take our responsibilities to protect the environment seriously. This is why we have been developing plans to protect the quality of the water in 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 or scan this handy QR code.



Fel cwmni, rydyn ni'n cymryd ein cyfrifoldebau dros amddiffyn yr amgylchedd o ddifri. 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, o'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.

Mae trwyddedau mewn grym yn ein gweithfeydd trin dŵr gwastraff i amddiffyn yr afon. Ein rheoleiddwyr amgylcheddol sy'n pennu'r trwyddedau hyn, a gallant eu newid pan fo angen i adlewyrchu anghenion newidiol yr afon, neu pan fo tystiolaeth newydd yn codi. Pan fo hynny'n digwydd, rydyn ni'n gweithio gyda'r rheoleiddwyr i wella ac uwchraddio ein gweithfeydd trin.

Rydyn ni'n deall bod ansawdd dŵr afonol yn fater pwysig i drigolion lleol ac rydyn ni wedi ymrwymo i chwarae ein rhan wrth leihau ein heffaith ar afon Wysg a'r amgylchedd ehangach. I gael rhagor o fanylion, ewch i dwrcymru.com/amgylchedd neu sganwch y cod QR hwylus.



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Ruth is qualified at Level 4 in Imperial Classical Ballet and BA (Hons) Professional Arts Practice (Dance). As well as Level 3 in Personal Training and Pilates.

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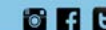
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Os oes diddordeb gennych mewn gosod eich eiddo, neu os hoffech fwy o fanylion ynglŷn â'r gwasanaeth a'r hyn yr ydym yn ei gynnig, cysylltwch â Clare Hamer

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What is Mental Health?

"Mental health is contentment with what is."

~ Dr Mark Howard

It was World Mental Health Day last week, so on the walk to school, my daughter and I pondered this simple question. She's been doing an online wellbeing course for kids and I was curious about how she sees things now, so I asked, "What d'you reckon mental health is, sweetheart?"

A well-versed 9 year old, used to right and wrong answers, I initially got, "Well, when anything happens, you can ask yourself the question, 'Does it look like something outside of me is taking away my wellbeing?' and that will tell you whether or not you're on the 'attached wellbeing path'. And that's not how it *actually* works."

Pretty good, in a textbook kind of way, but I wanted to know what she thought, so I asked her something a bit more abstract, "Well, *where* d'you reckon mental health is, then?"

She paused. "In your heart? No, ummm, your head. Oh. No. Umm, oh, I don't know!" (At this point probably wishing we could talk about *anything* other than this boring Dad stuff.)

Rounding a tree, the low autumn sun got involved in the discussion, and I pondered out loud, "Well, what if mental health was nothing to do with our bodies at all? What if it was a bit like the sun?"

"Always there, you mean, Dad?" (She's heard this metaphor before, and like you and me, needs reminding of it once in a while.)

"Exactly that. And do you think the sun needs looking after?"

"No, of course not. It looks after itself!"

"Can we always see the sun, during the daytime?"

"No, we couldn't see it first thing this morning, could we, Dad? It was covered up by the mist. It's really bright now!"

"It is! You know, maybe that's the closest we'll get to describing what mental health is: always there, doesn't need looking after, sometimes gets covered up."

"By our thinking, Dad?"

"Exactly that, kiddo." (Like I say, she knows the score.)

We walked for a while, talking about

wasps and friends and traffic lights and how awesome it is that we just saw three leaves fall off a tree all at once, when suddenly we spotted a volley of sun rays, slicing through the mist in the valley beneath our feet.

"WOWWWWWW!!!" we exclaimed, in unison.

We stood there in silence, marvelling at the light and shade, the spiders webs glistening in the sun, the kaleidoscope of colour... and we rested *in* mental health.

Because that's the other thing about it: Mental health is always Now. It can't be anywhere or anything else, because everything else is the clouds of our thinking, obscuring our innate health. That feeling of peace — of mental health — had nothing to do with the sun, or the mist and everything to do with just being.

Being. Present. No labels. No judgement. No Dad, no daughter, no past, no future, just life, now.

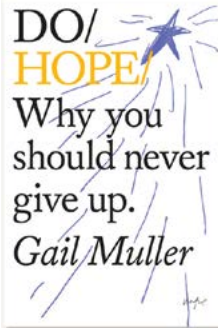
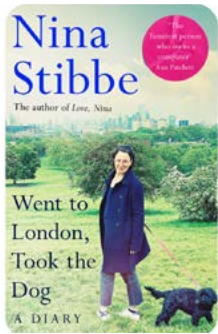
To attribute this feeling to something 'outside' of the moment is the 'attached wellbeing path' all over again, and it's a slippery slope. Because before we know it, we're back at square one, where it looks like we *can't* experience mental health unless the conditions are just right for us: the sun has to shine, people have to be nice to us, work or school have to be going ok.

But that's not how it *actually* works.

There is no barrier to entry for the experience of mental health. It's waiting for us every time we fall out of our thinking *about* life and instead go about our business, at one *with* life, be that looking at trees and sunlight, feeling wasps, waiting at traffic lights, watching leaves fall or even arguing with our friends.



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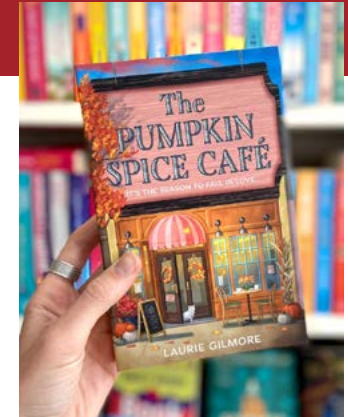
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Images credit: Louis Bannon

A Vivid Legacy

In the early 20th century, photography was all the rage as practitioners took pictures of life and special occasions. Helen Morgan from Abergavenny Local History Society reports.



Richard Henry Stevens's camera was seemingly his first love and we first meet him in 1911, working from home as a photographer in Crickhowell.

By 1914, however, he had moved to 18 Monk Street in Abergavenny and was running a cafe. From here he catered for events such as the Victory Parade in the

Corn Exchange in 1919. By 1921 he was living and working at "Castle House" now known as Abergavenny Museum. His passion, however, continued to be photography: snapping Crickhowell celebrating on Coronation day in 1911; soldiers who arrived by train to participate in the Territorial Army summer camps before heading off in

GWR omnibuses to the nearby hills. Thanks to RH Stevens, we know that Bwlch was one venue in 1912. His pictures document the white peaked tents of the 4th London Infantry Brigade in Talymaes near Crickhowell in 1913 and we see them marching to the drumbeat. But it was not all work. He snapped them at play: tugs of war, rolling out the barrels and visiting the pub are recorded as was rugby and riding with the hunt. When war broke out in August 1914 and with it the call to arms, Lord Kitchener appealed for volunteers who poured into Abergavenny by train from the Monmouthshire valleys. The railways that had brought TA troops to Abergavenny to training camps in the nearby hills had been commandeered by the Government to carry troops and arms to Pembroke Dock and the battlefields of World War One. Unlike today, Abergavenny was a significant railway hub with three train stations: Monmouth Road used by the Great Western Railway, Brecon Road which served LNER trains that travelled across the heads of the valleys from afar as Merthyr, and the Junction where the Merthyr trains joined the GWR line. Trains also brought wounded soldiers to convalesce, and prisoners of war to work here, as well as carrying iron to the armaments factories in the Midlands and steam coal for the Royal Navy as far north as Scapa Flow. And finally, we have the celebrations when the war ends.

Louis Bannon's talk on November 22nd starts at 7:30pm. It is available via Zoom to ALHS members as well as live at the Melville Theatre. To book your seat, please send an email to alhsmelvillebooking@icloud.com. For details visit abergavennylocalhistorysociety.org.uk



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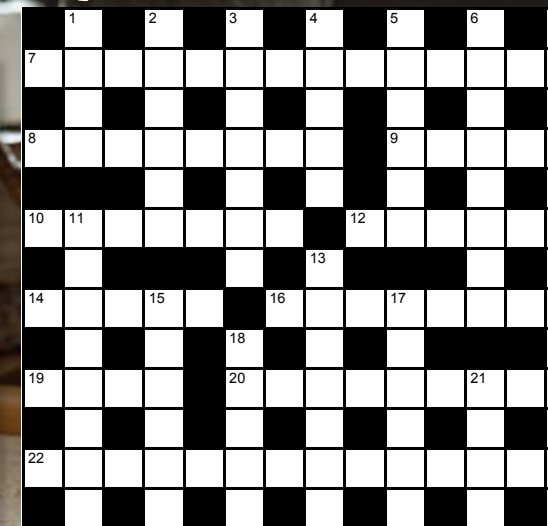
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Quick Crossword



ACROSS

- 7 Attentiveness (13)
- 8 Speaking (8)
- 9 Simple (4)
- 10 Breaks (7)
- 12 Prophecies (5)
- 14 Sound of a bell (5)
- 16 Happier (7)
- 19 Exhibit (4)
- 20 Approximate calculation (8)
- 22 Enquiry (13)

DOWN

- 1 Young male horse (4)
- 2 Way in (6)
- 3 Lures (7)
- 4 Boasts (5)
- 5 A narrow river (6)
- 6 Absurd talk (8)
- 11 Eating (8)
- 13 Held for ransom (7)
- 15 Solicitor (6)
- 17 Boundaries (6)
- 18 Large and heavy (5)
- 21 Implement (4)

Solutions on our website: www.thefocus.wales

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Before



After

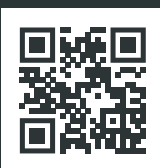
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Christmas Loaf Cakes

For cake mixture you will need:

BOWL 1

- 280g softened margarine or butter
- 280g dark brown sugar
- 5 large eggs (beaten)
- 1tbsp black treacle
- 340g plain flour

BOWL 2

- 680g currants
- 340g raisins
- 340g sultanas
- 110g ground almonds
- 110g mixed peel
- 110g chopped glace cherries
- 1tsp mixed spice
- ½ tsp ground cinnamon
- Grated rind of 2 lemons
- 3 tbsp sherry or brandy

Suggested Toppings

- Walnuts, Almonds, Brazils, Glace, Cherries, Dried Apricots, Dried Prunes, Figs etc.
- Apricot Jam for glaze

Last Christmas, instead of racking my brains in search of gift ideas for my work colleagues, I decided that I would bake individual Christmas Loaf cakes for them.

As I'm a keen baker I thoroughly enjoyed making them. It was an added bonus that they were both economical and looked good. These small, individual Christmas cakes went down a storm, so much so that my work colleagues have requested a repeat this year. You need to get them underway at least 6/8 weeks prior to Christmas so that the cakes fully mature and develop a good depth of flavour.

You can find disposable loaf containers in good cook shops or online. Add a gift tag and a piece of ribbon and hey presto: you have a unique, personal, hand-baked gift to give.

The following mixture yields enough for approximately 6 cakes.

- 1.** Bowl 2 – Mix all ingredients together, cover and set aside overnight so that the fruit has time to plump up.
 - 2.** Cream together the margarine/butter and sugar in Bowl 1. Beat in the beaten eggs a little at a time (if the mixture starts to curdle add a spoonful of flour.) Once you have mixed in the eggs, add black treacle and fold in the flour. Add all the ingredients from Bowl 2 and mix thoroughly. Divide mixture into individual cake containers.
 - 3.** Preheat your oven to Gas mark 3/160C/325F. Place the cakes in the oven. After 30 minutes reduce the heat to Gas mark 1-2/140C/ 275F. After an hour, the cakes should be golden brown, have risen nicely and feel firm to the touch. Insert a skewer into the centre of the cake – if the cake is cooked it should come out clean. If not, pop the cake back into the oven for 5-10 minutes.
 - 4.** Leave the cakes to cool before decorating with the toppings of your choice.
 - 5.** Make a glaze by melting apricot jam with a little water over a very gentle heat. Brush the glaze over your chosen cake topping and leave it to set.
- Finally, cover tightly with cling film and wrap as desired.



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