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HB FOOTCARE Celebrate Anniversary

See Page 7

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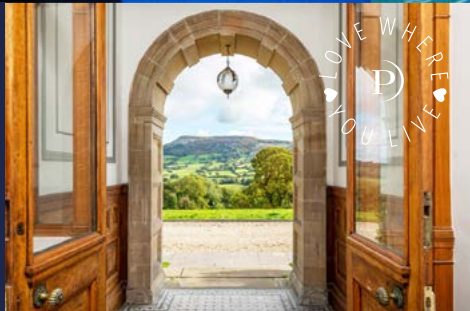
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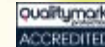


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Dear Readers,



Happy New Year! Are you looking forward to 2024 or approaching it cautiously? We can't quite believe that next month will mark our 200th edition of our sister magazine, the Abergavenny Focus. That's 16 years of magazines - it hardly seems possible! In

anticipation of that, a heartfelt thanks to you, our readers, and our advertisers for sticking with us through thick and thin in your support of the magazine.

However you're coming at the year ahead, we've got you. This month we've steered away from the 'New Year New You' trope and taken a gentler approach to invite you to consider what you might do this year. Might you exercise more? Make new friends? Be inspired? Now is the time to allow your thoughts to wander and consider. We've helped you along the way in providing lots of articles to whet your appetite. Take a look.

This year there are lots of exciting things on the horizon for us here at The Focus. We're not quite ready to reveal all just yet, but we're sure you're going to enjoy what we have in store for you in the coming twelve months. Watch this space! In the meantime, we'd like to extend our very best wishes to you and your families for a Happy, Healthy 2024!

Happy Reading,

Hannah

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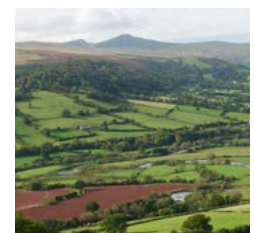
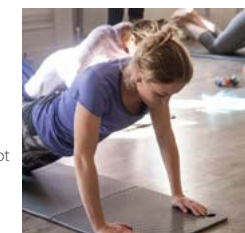
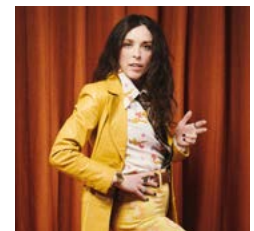
Contributions:
Heather Cook, Dr Giles P Croft, Jonathan Powell

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HB FOOTCARE Celebrate Anniversary



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only offered a topical treatment for the stubborn lesions, however this recent investment allows the clinicians to target verrucae and warts with a more precise and advanced technology. Swift delivers a highly controlled energy dose at a predetermined depth to the infected tissue. As the microwaves travel into the tissue, water molecules begin colliding creating localised heat. This heat allows the body's immune system to recognise the virus which is usually well hidden and act upon it.



Family run shoe shop and podiatry clinic **HB Foot Care** recently celebrated their first birthday in Cibi Walk after their expansion from their much smaller premises in Market Street.

One year on sees a wide variety of quality footwear, with brands such as Rieker, Josef Siebel and Skechers to name a few. As well as boasting a successfully established clinic to the rear of the store offering podiatry and chiropody treatments from its dedicated team lead by founder and director, Holly Bowen.

HB Foot Care are now very proud to introduce Abergavenny to MyFootBalance®, a 'free, no obligation to buy' 3D foot scanning service within the shop, which not only allows the floor staff to measure your feet correctly for the perfect shoe fitting free of charge. It can also assist in recommending a range of products that are personalised to your unique needs.

This new service also offers an informative biomechanical foot analysis for patients who attend the clinic for a foot pain assessment, as the 3D scanner can identify foot imbalances such as low arches that can cause plantar fasciitis. As the vast majority of us live with a foot imbalance which may cause pain, the introduction of an orthotic insole worn in the shoes are the simplest and most effective way to minimise any pain and the risk of injury due to foot misalignment.

The highly trained staff analyse the data from the MyFootBalance® scans and are equipped to mould a custom medical grade orthotic insole there and then, ready for the customer to take home in less than 15 minutes.

Adding another string to their clinical bow, HB Foot Care are happy to now offer Swift Microwave Therapy to patients suffering with verrucae. In the past the clinic has

With its international rising success rate of 85% Swift is one of, if not the most convenient forms of verruca treatment, there is no need for the patient to wear dressings or apply anything to the area between the minimum 4 initial appointments. As with all medical procedures, a cure is never 100% guaranteed, however a management plan will be discussed with your clinician at your first consultation before going ahead with any treatment.

As always, HB Foot Care offer appointments for toenail cutting, corn and callus removal, fungal nails, ingrown nail removal, foot pain assessments and diabetic foot care. Home visits and residential visits are also available. Booking is required so please call or pop into store to secure appointments.

Crickhowell Walking Festival 2024



Photo by Suzanne Walker, 2023 Photo Competition Winner

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Our 16th Festival is already proving as popular as ever! CWF 2024 will feature 81 walks throughout the National Park and beyond, backed up by workshops and an entertaining programme of evening events.

Our refreshed programme offers walks varying from 2 to 17 miles; local strolls through to strenuous all-day expeditions across our mountain ranges. We are again running TM5, a challenge to climb Crickhowell's own summit, Table Mountain, up to five times in a day – medals for all those who complete at least three ascents.

CWF 2024 benefits CRiC, the Crickhowell Resource and Information Centre charity –

also Brecon and District MIND, offering information, advice and other mental health support services across the National Park area with clients at the organisation's heart.

www.breconmind.org.uk.

Big thanks go to the volunteers who lead the walks, present the talks and provide the backroom organisation, and to the local businesses who sponsor walks and welcome our walkers to Crickhowell and the National Park. Check them out on the website's 'Crickhowell Information Page' or follow the links on the Walk Pages.

Go now to: www.crickhowellfestival.com to find out more and make your booking.



The Comedy Festival

The Black Mountains Comedy Festival returns for its third year with its eclectic mix of comedians, slap stick theatre and an outreach programme that includes a tour of care homes and a free Theatre show that will reach the hearts of the local community from 0 to 100 years old!

The festival has grown since its first event just before lock down in 2020 with Rich Hall and Mark Watson, and from the beginning, community projects have been at the heart of the festival.

"The aim of the Black Mountains Comedy Festival is to bring laughter and light to the community during the dark months of winter." The festival has an impressive list of top comedians who've performed in The Clarence Hall Crickhowell but alongside this have an impressive portfolio of Outreach Projects; working in schools, with Ukrainian refugees and this year the festival is producing free circus workshops and slapstick matinee theatre performance with Circo Rum Baba and a tour of local Care Homes.

"We had such a positive response from the care homes as soon as we started talking to them. The care homes immediately appreciated how residents would benefit from comedy and like us, share the belief that laughter is the best medicine." Cardiff based Kitsch n Sync will be performing in the homes. "We're so excited about this project and have waited to work with Kitsch n Sync



Bridget Christie will headline on Saturday 3rd February

who create a hilarious mix of cheeky story telling with the most fantastic costumes!"

Circo Rum Baba performed at last year's festival and delighted audiences so much they were invited to return. "Live theatre is an enriching experience for all ages – especially when it is of this quality," said Gerard, "We have worked hard to secure funding that will allow everyone in our

community to come and enjoy this great show for FREE, so save the date!!"

This festival keeps growing and this year there are three days of comedy. The Festival begins Thursday 1st February with a Fringe event curated by Huw Davies, founder of the successful Aber Laugh. "Supporting and growing Welsh talent is close to our hearts and Huw was a natural

That Just Keeps Giving!



Hal Cruttenden will be performing Friday 2nd February

partner," adds Jim Godding the other half of the Black Mountains Team. "Alongside booking A-listers we always support talent that is on the way up and we found a lot of great comics appearing at Huw's events."

2024's festival line up includes headliners Edinburgh Award winner Bridget Christie (C4's The Change) and Hal Cruttenden

(Rugby's On, Have I got News for You). On Saturday 3rd February Ross Smith will be joining Bridget Christie and returning with his mix of self depreciating humour and audience fun and there's Festival newcomers Julia Stenton and Mike Reed who both know how to bring the house down.

Hal Cruttenden will be joined on Friday 2nd February by the

great Welsh line-up of Sarah Bridgeman, Huw Davies and Leila Navabi who between them have won awards and standing ovations.

Tickets for all events and workshops are now available on the Black Mountains Comedy Festival website and with a line up like this – a fantastic time is guaranteed!

Festival Line up

THURSDAY 1ST FEBRUARY

Huw Davies, Steffan Evans, Gareth Hunt (Welsh Jesus), Gilly Webb, Dan Coughtry

FRIDAY 2ND FEBRUARY

Hal Cruttenden, Leila Navabi, Sarah Bridgeman, Huw Davies

SATURDAY 3RD FEBRUARY

Circus Skills Workshop (Free – Booking Essential)

The Dress Circle performed by Circo Rum Baba (Free – Booking Essential)

Bridget Christie, Ross Smith, Julia Stenton, Mike Reed (£25 - £40)

Crickhowell and District Players present

THESE BOOTS WERE MADE FOR... PANTO

PUSS IN BOOTS

What a purrrr-fect way to brighten up January!! Join us at the newly refurbished Clarence

Hall Crickhowell and enjoy this year's Panto from Crickhowell and District Players. Directed by Cara Perkins and Starring Kirsty Havard as Puss and Kristina Wheaton as Principal boy, Puss in Boots takes place from Thursday January 18th to Saturday 20th 2024. That's 4 shows in all including a Saturday matinee .

Performances begin at 7:00 each night and 10:30 am on Saturday morning .

We would love to see you as you cheer on our clever Puss as she helps her master achieve his dream

Puss is supported in her task by a diverse cast of actors, singers and dancers whose purr-fect purr-formances will

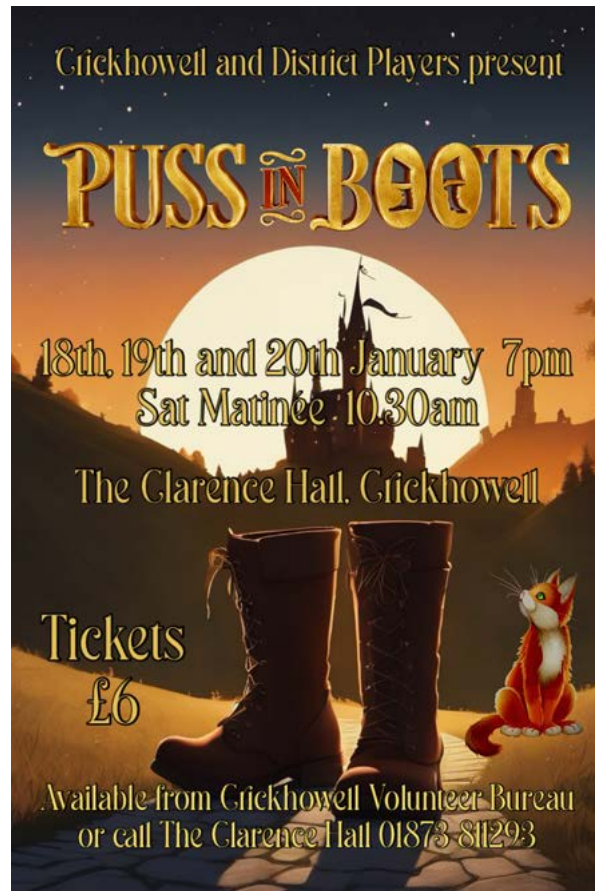
entertain, delight and enthral you and spur you to singalong and cheer. Tickets are £6 each.



To obtain your ticket, either

* order via the Clarence Hall's answerphone message line on 01873 811293 or

* purchase direct from Crickhowell Volunteer Bureau office situated in the Cric building Beaufort Street, Crickhowell



EVENTS CALENDAR JANUARY 2024

18TH, 19TH & 20TH JANUARY
Crickhowell & District Players Present
PUSS IN BOOTS

See article opposite

19TH JANUARY
Book-ish Event
GABRIELLE TREANOR
THE 1% WELLNESS EXPERIMENT

7.30pm, Book-ish Loft, 18 High St, Crickhowell
Tickets £10 or £15 with book
www.book-ish.co.uk/events

1-3RD FEBRUARY
BLACK MOUNTAINS COMEDY FESTIVAL

See article Page 10

2ND FEBRUARY
Book-ish Event
MADELINE GREY - GREEN DOT

7.30pm, Book-ish Loft, 18 High St, Crickhowell
Tickets £12 or £20 with book
www.book-ish.co.uk/events

9TH FEBRUARY
Book-ish Event
JASPER FFORDE - RED SIDE STORY

7.30pm, Book-ish Loft, 18 High St, Crickhowell
Tickets £12 or £20 with book
www.book-ish.co.uk/events

9TH JANUARY
Book-ish Event
MATT PRITCHARD
DIRTY VEGAN FAST AND EASY



7.30pm, Manor Hotel, Crickhowell
Tickets from www.book-ish.co.uk/events

13TH JANUARY
BRECKNOCK SINFONIA CONCERT

Concert of music for String Orchestra by Purcell, Dag Wren, Tchaikovsky, Holst, Sibelius and Granville Bantock
4pm, Brecon Cathedral
For info and tickets please visit
www.brecknocksinfonia.org.uk

14TH JANUARY
AN EVENING WITH DR GILES P CROFT

6.30pm-8pm, The Loft at Little Green Refills, Market St, Abergavenny, NP7 5SD
Tickets £20 in advance. www.gilescroft.com/meet-the-author. See Page 27 for full info

Looking Ahead



SHARE YOUR EVENT

Go to:

thefocus.wales/calendar/

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

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January Weather Outlook

by Jonathan Powell

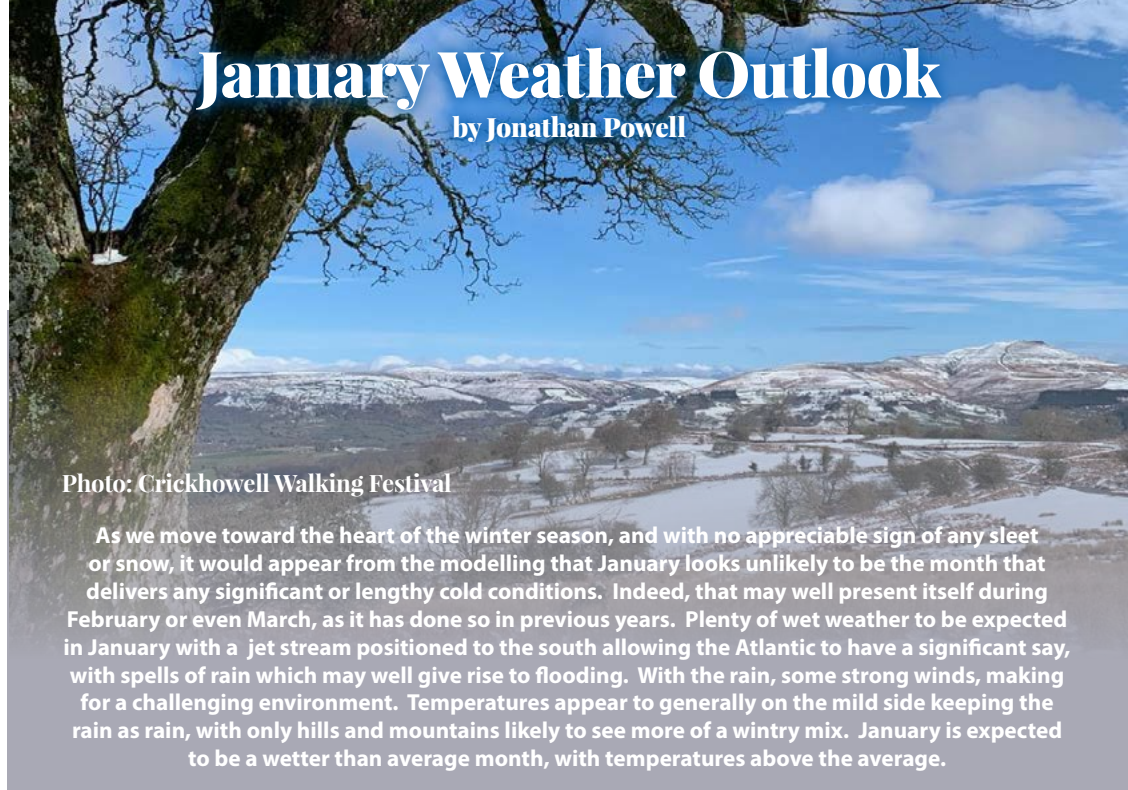


Photo: Crickhowell Walking Festival

As we move toward the heart of the winter season, and with no appreciable sign of any sleet or snow, it would appear from the modelling that January looks unlikely to be the month that delivers any significant or lengthy cold conditions. Indeed, that may well present itself during February or even March, as it has done so in previous years. Plenty of wet weather to be expected in January with a jet stream positioned to the south allowing the Atlantic to have a significant say, with spells of rain which may well give rise to flooding. With the rain, some strong winds, making for a challenging environment. Temperatures appear to generally on the mild side keeping the rain as rain, with only hills and mountains likely to see more of a wintry mix. January is expected to be a wetter than average month, with temperatures above the average.

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Rules and Regulations

What is Changing in Estate Agency 2024

As we enter 2024, it is usual to look back on the previous year and reflect. 2023 was a year of change and challenges, a year of reset and transition in terms of property prices and demand, an unstable economy and conflict in the world. As a business we had some successes and other areas that did not go so well... we learn, we adapt and move forward.

2024 sees the 20th birthday of Parys in Abergavenny, which we shall be celebrating in March. The estate agency world today is so very different from my early days in the 1990s, not only with the introduction of technology, but the extent of information that is now freely available. As a business, we are more focussed on marketing. 'In the old days' we used to take photographs, order them and, a few days later, choose the best ones and literally stick them on a 2-page set of sale particulars which had been typed by a secretary. If none of the photographs were any good, we had to re-take them and wait for the new ones to arrive. Today, in the digital world, the availability of media is more immediate, but the work putting brochures together and loading on to the property portals is more onerous. We also spend far more time



ensuring a property is presented to its highest standard when it is launched to the open market.

One of the key changes within Estate Agency is the launch of Parts B and C under the Consumer Protection Regulations. You may recall circa 10 years ago the Property Misdescriptions Act 1991 was introduced which made it a criminal offence for estate agents to make false or misleading statements about properties being offered for sale. The focus at the time was around sizes of bedrooms – how big does a room need to be to be designated a bedroom? And to ensure that any material information was not 'hidden' from a potential buyer e.g. is there a pylon close by? This was the first time, as agents, we started to use a Property Information Form and obtain

further information about a property before bringing to the market.

The Property Misdescriptions Act was replaced by Consumer Protection Regulations (CPRs) which dictate that both a selling agent and the owner of a property must provide any material information which may influence a buyer's decision to purchase a property. In practical terms, this is anything that the sellers may be aware of that is relevant to the purchase of their property e.g. whether the property floods, has suffered from subsidence etc. As an agent, we have had to carry out more due diligence including verifying ownership of a property and checking title plans and boundaries. And, of course, Anti Money Laundering checks which are required for all buyers and sellers.

The Consumer Protection Regulations covers 3 parts, A, B and C. Part A was introduced in early 2022 and stated basic information needed to be stated, primarily council tax band or rate, property price and tenure.

More recently, details of Part B and C have been released, further information that is required pre-marketing, Part B includes: Property type and construction; number of rooms and measurements; information regarding utilities, especially relevant for rural properties with non-mains services and parking arrangements.

Part C will cover more detailed information including: Building safety e.g. unsafe cladding, asbestos and any areas in risk of collapse; restrictions and covenants including whether a property is listed, falls within a conservation area or whether there are any trees subject to a Tree Preservation Order (TPO); flood or coastal erosion risk; public rights of way and shared driveways; details of any planning consent relating to the property to be sold and any properties/land in the immediate vicinity and any material information which may affect a property.

Fortunately, we already cover circa 80% of the information required by the new regulations and will be installing a new, electronic based Property Information Form which is based on the legal forms so the seller will be providing information which covers most of the information required by their solicitor too, hopefully reducing duplication.

The National Trading Standards Estate and Letting Agency Team are based in Powys and

have produced guidelines to help agents meeting their legal obligations and which, hopefully, will improve standards across the industry, which can only be a positive step.

As a business, we see first-hand how stressful the present English and Welsh conveyancing system is. Quite often, delays fall outside of the estate agents and solicitor's control e.g. matters being dealt with by Land Registry or the Probate office. The latest statistics for Wales state the average time to find a buyer is circa 67 days (this will vary depending on type of property, price and area) and the average time for a transaction to complete once a buyer is found is circa 12 weeks.

As a business, we have a saying that placing a property on the market is not about 'speed to market' but 'speed to sale' i.e. spend time presenting a property, consider the launch price and carry out as much due diligence before a property is placed on the market for sale. Hopefully, this approach minimises the obstacles faced once a buyer is found and helps make for a smoother and quicker transaction. Undoubtedly, there are instances where information comes to light during the conveyancing process which must be dealt with at the time. Our advice is to engage with a solicitor at the start of the process rather than waiting until a buyer is found.

I have probably bored you all now, for which I apologise. However, there is a perception that estate agents 'take a few photos and put a property on Rightmove' and hope for the best. This perception is very far removed from the reality and I

thought it may be useful for you to understand a little more about some of the work that goes on behind the scenes.

If you are considering marketing your home and would like to pop in the office or telephone to discuss the important work that needs to be done pre-marketing, please do not hesitate to contact my colleague Ben Watkins or me.

I am feeling very optimistic as we enter 2024. There will be more change and challenges ahead, but our motto is to be 'Ahead of the Curve' and to adapt. During the late 1980's the railway industry launched the slogan 'let the train take the strain,' our philosophy is the same – we want to ensure our sellers' and buyers' move to their new home is as stress free as possible and we are there every step of the way to help smooth the journey.

Heather Cook



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Miriam Vincent



Miriam Vincent of Minnie La La Designs is becoming known as 'The Happy Artist' which is fabulous accolade to have because who doesn't want to make people happier?

However, it is only through her heartbreaking experience of losing her mother that she has arrived at that. When her mother died very suddenly, to dreaded Cancer, her grief was all consuming and it was as though her life had lost all meaning.


Miriam had a young family to look after, so in order to navigate her way through her grief she found solace in the great outdoors.

After spending much time walking and running in all kinds of weather, she slowly started to notice the changing of the seasons; the colours of the leaves on the trees, seeds pushing fresh green shoots out of the soil, sunsets and rises, new moons and full, stars in the sky, that she found she could see beauty in the world again.

Miriam began to paint, and she painted without purpose at first, just to create and the results were bright, colourful pieces of artwork.

Miriam is now passionate about sharing her story of grief, helping others connect with nature and creating spaces for people to unleash their creativity and find themselves through art.

She runs various workshops including painting parties for hen do's, birthdays, and other occasions and has also started to take the workshops into the workplace for wellbeing art workshops / team





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...Create New Habits

kt-pilates and well-being



The start of a new year brings a fresh opportunity to create new habits and if you've ever wondered about Pilates and its many benefits to both body and mind, read on.

Joseph Pilates created his method back in the early 1900's and its popularity has grown ever since. This is no coincidence - it works! It's proven to be a safe and effective form of exercise which is recommended by GPs and healthcare professionals and its benefits reach far beyond just the toning of muscles.

Pilates can help with your core strength, posture, balance, mobility and fitness. The mind-body aspect of the method means it's also excellent for relieving stress and anxiety, clearing the mind and helping with concentration and focus.

We all know that feel-good endorphins are released when we exercise which can happen in as little as 10 minutes. Brain blood flow is also elevated after a work-out which gives us a natural high. Breathing, mindfulness, movement and routine all combine in Pilates to help us feel strong from the inside out and lift our spirits during difficult times.

I have personally experienced the positive effects of Pilates and have also witnessed transformation in countless clients. Whether it's relief from constant back pain or rehabilitation after injury or surgery, the results have been remarkable.

It's not a fad but a trusted form of exercise that requires you to take action and be in control of your own wellbeing, which is extremely empowering.

If you create one new habit this year, let it be Pilates. With practice and commitment, you will see a

change in your body and in my opinion, it's the best present you could ever give yourself!

If you would like to start Pilates, I teach classes locally and would be happy to help you on your way. If you can't get to class, I have also launched an on-demand Pilates platform so that you can learn from scratch in your own home. Short videos will teach you the method and you can dip in and out to suit your time constraints, ability and needs.

www.kt-pilates.co.uk

Access Pilates classes anywhere, anytime with local instructor Kate Thomas

Learn Pilates from scratch with my 'Tiny Habits' 31 day challenge. **Just 10 minutes a day, starting January 1st.**

Choose from 5 min to 50 min classes to suit your schedule.

Beginners to Advanced classes with everything in between.

Videos with small equipment (weights, circle, bands) to add resistance to your training.

Access via your laptop, download the app or cast to your TV.

Feel confident that your teaching is from a fully certified APPI Pilates Instructor with years of hands-on experience.

New content added every week to keep you motivated.

£10 pm for access to the whole library of videos - cancel anytime.

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reviews on
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IN 2024 ...

...Love Yourself!

As someone working in the well

being industry, it might surprise you that I'm not one for the 'New Year, New You' hype.

While it is a convenient time to begin or recommit to goals, the January fervour for overhauling our habits can set us up for some pretty unhealthy strategies like crash dieting, exercising to punish ourselves, failing to attain the promised results and then believing we are incapable and unworthy of the life we desire.

Most of us do not prioritise adequate self care, let alone the sort of self love practice which fills us enough to pour from the overflow. We experience exhaustion, and are running on empty. Never is this truer than after Christmas.

I would like to advocate for a new approach. A more gentle one which allows us to ease into January, unburdened by further expectations and reasons to beat ourselves up.

Rather than viewing ourselves pathologically (only seeing what is wrong with us) what might it be to shift our perspective from sick, broke, overweight etc to instead acknowledging what I call The Health.

In my client practice, I always begin looking for The Health. This is the positive starting point of What Can I Already Do? What Is Already Working? What Brings Joy, Ease, Freedom?

We have been trained to see ourselves as perpetual improvement projects, while simultaneously being alienated from self belief, confidence, and courage- things vital to the pursuit of an expansive life.

As a somatic therapist, I am sceptical that lasting positive change happens by merely changing our minds. While education around nutrition, movement, psychology, relationships, trauma recovery and healing is important, most of us know what we could be doing, but

Start Where You Are: A Somatic Approach to Self Care

actually doing it is another story!

Our beliefs are embodied and show up as habitual behaviours. The way we eat, sleep, move, spend, and relate to others are all outward expressions of silent embodied processes buried in our body-mind.

Through Somatic practice positive change is created through bodily processes including breathing, moving, touch, creativity, and safe shared experiences. It starts with radical peace making with where we are, by softening our reflexive gaze to one of acceptance and appreciation, and perceiving even momentarily, The Enough of me, of this moment, and the journey.

Becky, aka Boo Bond
Body & Earth 32 High Street
Crickhowell NP8 1BE

bodyandearthbookings@gmail.com



Body & Earth Spring Retreat:
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Forest Farm Retreat, Nr Abergavenny

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Allt Yr Esgair Walk

By Kevin Walker



Allt yr Esgair is a rocky knoll offering stunning views in every direction. This circular walk takes you to the summit and back and explores some of the hidden delights including the enigmatic ruins of the Paragon Tower, nestled amongst the trees. There are the remains of an impressive Iron Age hill fort, and the summit has two National Park interpretive boards giving useful information about the views, plus a memorial (in English and in Welsh – one on each side of the wall) to Eirene, Baroness White of Rhymney, who was the President of the Council for the Protection of Rural Wales from 1973 – 1989.

A herd of Highland cattle graze the hill; put here to help reduce the spread of invasive bracken and thus enhance the biodiversity. They are impressively large beasts and can appear quite fierce, but they are docile and gentle and will not cause you any problem as long as you don't pester them.

TO GET TO THE START

The walk starts from a large lay-by and picnic area on the main A40 between Abergavenny and Brecon. This lay-by is just over one kilometre to the west of the village of Bwlch, and there is often a mobile snack-bar on site (the bacon sandwiches, in particular, are highly recommended!). There are public toilets at the western end of the lay-by.

THE WALK

- From the lay-by, start up the farm track but almost immediately turn left through a gate. Follow the grassy track diagonally uphill across the fields through two gates, go under the power cables and enter the woods through a wooden gate. Continue past old quarries through delightful woodland to reach a sharp angled T junction where you should bear slightly left.
- Follow the obvious track with increasingly good views, at one point climbing

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30



MEET THE AUTHOR

An Evening with Dr Giles P Croft

- Author of the popular monthly Wellbeing Column
- Meet and chat with Giles in person
- Hear the stories behind the articles
- Have your favourites read out by the author
- Get your questions answered

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As seen in the:

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All tickets in advance • £20 • www.gilescroft.com/meet-the-author

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Gratitude for the hard of Journaling

“Gratitude is there when our mind isn’t creating problems.”

~ Dr Amy Johnson

I started working with a client recently who had me in stitches, when they let rip with their views on gratitude. Off work from the NHS with anxiety, stress and burnout, they’d tried lots of things and none had worked, including written reflection, “So don’t go suggesting I start a gratitude journal or anything, because I’ll just burn it!”

This tickled me because it reflected my own experience, when, during a particularly low period in my life, I took up journaling in order to try and feel better... and failed spectacularly. Sure, at first it helped me to focus on the things I had, rather than the things I felt were missing, but I slowly came to see it as a chore; evidence of yet another thing I’d failed at, when I literally couldn’t think of anything to be grateful for.

After several months of striving for an “attitude of gratitude” all I could muster was something more akin to a “defective perspective,” so I gave up.

And yet, it’s important, isn’t it, gratitude? It’s a key feature of every religious and spiritual text going and has been shown to be associated with higher levels of subjective wellbeing, lower

levels of stress and depression, better sleep and more satisfying relationships... so what was I doing wrong?

There’s a clue in one dictionary definition of the word, which says it’s “a warm and friendly feeling, in response to a favour or favours received.” Now, while I have no problem with the first half of that definition — gratitude is, after all, a feeling state — the second can easily trip us up, because it reinforces the widely held misunderstanding that our feelings come from situations, people or things. As soon as we mistakenly attribute warm and friendly feelings to anything outside of us — “I am grateful for...” — we’re not only buying into this illusion, but we’re also subconsciously implying that the absence of those things is cause for feelings of lack. (It’s a big dollar, that ‘not-enough’ dollar.)

In a classic *Homo Sapiens* move, we’ve taken a built-in, always available, lovely state of being... and gone and turned it into a *doing*. But you can’t reverse engineer gratitude – it’s just part of who and what we are. We experience warm and friendly feelings for free, every time we’re not thinking about all the things that are wrong with our lives.

Four sessions later and my client was back at work, and seeing all of life through a completely different lens. By working together to better understand the *nature* of thought, we’d got some serious distance from the mind’s jabbering and it had largely given up the ghost; to their surprise leaving them feeling calm, clear-headed and confident.

Hesitantly, I revisited the notion of gratitude, and it was their turn to laugh, “Oh, I totally get it now! I’m so much more present, that I’m just naturally noticing a whole load of stuff to be grateful for... well, everything, really!”

Gratitude is not something you do. It’s our default – a feeling that we reconnect to, every time we’re fully present to life... which it turns out, is pretty amazing, just as it is!

You can write that down, if you like.



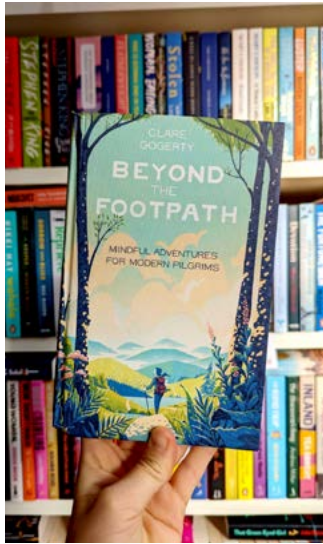
Dr Giles P Croft
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Healing • Coaching •
Speaking

Come and meet Giles, and hear the stories behind the articles, when he hosts a “Meet the Author” event at Little Green Refills in Abergavenny on Sunday 14th January, 6.30pm. Tickets are all in advance and available at: gilescroft.com/meet-the-author

Book Recommendations

Begin a New Year with a new book. Here are the top picks for January from the Book-ish Booksellers.

Begin a New Year with a new book. Here are the top picks for January from the Book-ish Booksellers.



Beyond the Footpath: Mindful Adventures for Modern Pilgrims
Clare Cogerty £8.99
 Beyond the Footpath will take you on a journey to places of spiritual or personal significance - and show you how to travel in a way that enhances your connection to the world and to yourself. Whether you choose a long-distance trail, an ascent of an awe-inspiring mountain, a walk in an ancient forest, a journey to a temple, stone circle or sacred garden, or simply a lunchtime stroll to somewhere special, this book has suggestions and tips to inspire you to open the door and walk into a world of wonder.



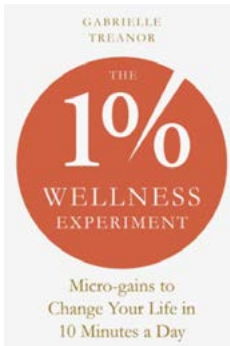
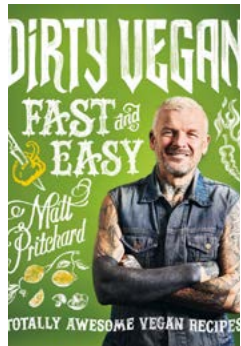
The 1% Wellness Experiment: Micro-gains to Change your Life in 10 Minutes a Day
Gabrielle Treanor £12.99
 This book invites you to enter into a month-long experiment: use 1% of your day for 1 month to focus on you. The micro-gain challenges in the book are designed to improve your mood and increase your happiness without, crucially, taking up your valuable time. Challenges include establishing boundaries and saying no, dealing with your inner critic, overcoming anxiety and comparison. By the end of the month you will have created your own bespoke kit of tools that lower your stress, strengthen your connections, instil calm and increase your joy.



Mindfulness in Drawing: Meditations on Creativity and Calm
Wendy Ann Greenhalgh £12.99
 Everyone can draw, and everyone can be mindful. Mindfulness in Drawing is an engaging and enlightening insight into how setting pencil to paper is a meditative act by its innate nature, and how this creates a deeper connection between ourselves and the world around us. Through mindful creative exercises and personal anecdotes, doodlers and artists at any level in their craft will gain practical experience in and discover the joys of drawing mindfully.



Walking in the Woods
Professor Yoshifumi Miyazaki £10.99
 'Forest bathing' or shinrin-yoku is a way of walking in the woods that was developed in Japan in the 1980s. It brings together ancient ways and wisdom with cutting edge environmental health science. Simply put, forest bathing is the practice of walking slowly through the woods, in no hurry, for a morning, an afternoon or a day. In this wonderful book, by the leading expert in the field, science meets nature, as we are encouraged to bathe in the trees and become observers of both the environment around us and the goings on of our own minds.



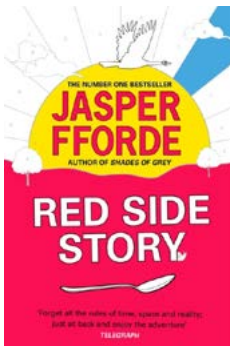
MATT PRITCHARD - 9TH JAN
THE MANOR, CRICKHOWELL
TICKET £10 | WITH BOOK £22

GABRIELLE TREANOR - 19TH JAN
BOOK-ISH LOFT, CRICKHOWELL
TICKET £10 | WITH BOOK £15

MADELEINE GRAY - 2ND FEB
BOOK-ISH LOFT, CRICKHOWELL
TICKET £12 | WITH BOOK £20

JASPER FFORDE - 9TH FEB
CLARENCE HALL, CRICKHOWELL
TICKET £12 | WITH BOOK £20

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Awe: The Transformative Power of Everyday Wonder
Dacher Keltner £10.99
 Drawing on his own scientific research into how awe transforms our brains and bodies, alongside an examination of awe across history, culture and within his own life during a period of immense grief, Keltner shows us how cultivating wonder leads us to appreciate what is most humane in our human nature.



Mindfulness in Knitting
Rachel Matthews £12.99
 Anyone can pick up a pair of needles and a ball of yarn. And everyone can be mindful. Mindfulness in Knitting casts fresh light on this renowned calming craft, and reveals how the act of "knit and purl" can be the epitome of conscious living.



The Poetry Pharmacy Forever: New Prescriptions to Soothe, Revive and Inspire
William Sieghart £14.99
 Drawing on lockdown correspondence with the public and his own specialist advice, this final volume in the bestselling Poetry Pharmacy series contains more soothing lyrical balm for the most testing of times.

steeply to the right, but soon swinging left again and continuing less steeply. Go through another gate by a pine tree and continue to the right of a fence. At the junction, go straight ahead following the sign to Pennorth.

3. At the next gate, ignore the obvious main path ahead, instead following the fainter path to the right of the fence, soon reaching the enigmatic ruins of the Paragon Tower. Little is known about these mysterious ruins. Some people believe them to be the remains of an 18th or very early 19th century folly or hunting lodge associated with the local estate. Whatever their origin or purpose, they were obvious once a very substantial and lovingly built building comprising several interconnecting rooms, all built around a huge central fireplace. At the far side of the ruins, cross a wooden stile with a white arrow and follow the faint path leading steeply and sometimes awkwardly downhill to regain the main path. Turn right and climb gently towards some gorse bushes, soon emerging onto an open field where the faint but obvious path continues straight ahead.

4. Follow the level path round the hillside, and Llangorse Lake soon appears directly ahead. Descend, keeping alongside the gorse to your right, eventually entering a grove of trees where you bear right and follow any of several paths up through the woods, eventually nearing a stone wall to your left and merging with a deeply entrenched track. (NOTE – you can shorten this section by walking steeply uphill alongside

the gorse until you reach an obvious gap in the dense vegetation. Go through this and turn right onto the well-defined path.)

5. An obvious though sometimes muddy path leads up the centre of the ridge, eventually levelling out at a wooden gate. Go through the gate then continue straight ahead along the main path with the wall to your left. The summit of Allt yr Esgair is now obvious ahead, and the strange ups and downs across lumps and bumps are the remains of a once substantial and strategically important Iron Age hillfort. The rock outcrops on the right make a great viewpoint and offer some great photo opportunities, and there are several sheltered lunch spots along their base. However, be aware that there are some fairly big drops, so keep your eyes on adventurous young children. Continuing along the main path, the summit is only a short distance away, and it is here you will find a substantial stone wall with a stone seat. There is also a gap in the wall, and if you go through it you will find there is an identical stone seat on the far side, so you can shelter from the wind no matter what the direction. National Park information boards describe the views both to the north and to the south, and there are also memorial stones to Baroness White of Rhymney, the inscription being in English on one side of the wall and in Welsh on the other.

6. Leave the summit along the obvious continuation path, soon starting to descend. Keep going straight ahead to where a wall cuts across

your path, then bear right and continue along a grassy track with a wall to your left and a fence to your right. Once through the next gate, keep to the right side of the field beyond, descending more steeply and eventually aiming for an obvious gate in the hedge at the bottom right-hand corner of the field. Look out for deer in the fields ahead and to your left – all part of the Bwlch Venison Farm.

7. Go through the gate and continue along a straight track – the route of a Roman Road – with the venison farm fields to your left and woods to your right. A short distance along this track, turn off through an obvious gate on the right and descend increasingly steeply along an ancient lane between high hedges, shortly reaching a gate near a farm. Follow a well waymarked path sharply to the left to reach another gate, then follow the path around to the right, soon heading left down a short section of awkwardly rocky path to reach a surfaced lane which leads directly back to the start.

Kevin Walker



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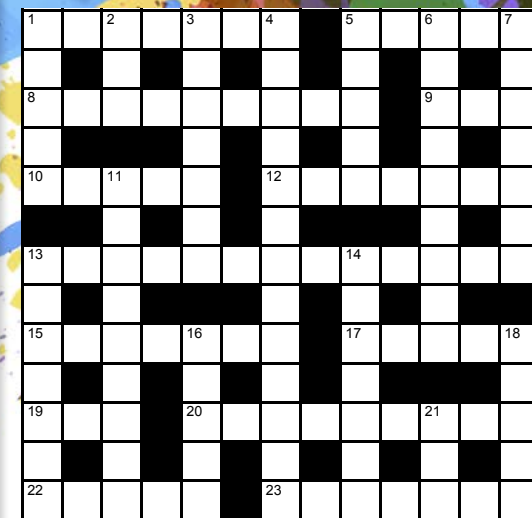
Quick Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 King's title (7)
- 5 Herb (5)
- 8 Sprays water (9)
- 9 Curved line (3)
- 10 Sword (5)
- 12 Remote military camp (7)
- 13 Incendiary guns (13)
- 15 Highest noble rank (7)
- 17 Tests (5)
- 19 Concerned with the environment (3)
- 20 Raised area (9)
- 22 Give up (5)
- 23 Wandered (7)

DOWN

- 1 Disguises (5)
- 2 Glass container (3)
- 3 Genuine, honest (7)
- 4 Colourful small birds (13)
- 5 Hat (5)
- 6 E.g. East Enders (4,5)
- 7 Finds (7)
- 11 Region in space (5,4)
- 13 Nervous (7)
- 14 Outside (4-3)
- 16 fear (5)
- 18 Church council (5)
- 21 Climbing plant (3)





New Year. New Home!

New Year wishes from Heather, Ben and the Fine & Country team.

We are here to help you if you are looking to move during 2024, please contact us by e-mail, telephone, social media or pop in to our showroom, we would love to see you.

Please contact Heather Cook or Ben Watkins
via telephone : 01873 736515
or e-mail : abergavenny@fineandcountry.com



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