

APRIL 2024 ISSUE 202

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Dear Readers,



We've been producing monthly magazines for Abergavenny and the surrounding area for 16 years. We know of many similar publications to *The Focus*, throughout the UK, who have not stood the test of time, and suffered badly during the Covid pandemic which led to them eventually folding. We count ourselves extremely lucky not to be one of those. Much of it isn't down to luck, though; it's down to the very special nature of our community which supports our business and the local businesses here in our town and surrounding villages.

It's really not surprising that Abergavenny was recently voted the best town to live in the whole of Wales in the Sunday Times. It's something you and I know, and now our town is being recognised for it. One of the factors that led judges to declare Abergavenny as being best was the health of the high street and local businesses. We're fortunate to have a local business community that is blossoming and growing, and long may it stay that way! This month we wanted to draw your attention to the local gems that are hidden in plain sight here in Abergavenny - businesses that you may be aware of but may have never used, or not used for a while. Why not show them some support - rediscover them and their unique, friendly service? At the risk of sounding evangelical, we must continue to support our local businesses in terms of retail, trade and suppliers in order to keep our community thriving for years to come.

Lots to read about this month, so kick back and enjoy!

Hannah

Publisher: Focus Magazines Ltd

Tel: 01873 856614

EMAIL: hello@thefocus.wales

Contributions:

Pippa Bannon, Emma Bevan-Hendersonm, Tina Carrot, Heidi Charlton, Louise Collis, Heather Cook, Huw Davies, Pauline Mardell, Helen Morgan, Mary Morgan, Lucie Parkin, Marion Pearse, Jonathan Powell, David Prout, Karen Smith, Kate Thomas, Christie Residential, Peak Cymru

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Playworkers



**Abergavenny Community Centre is looking to build
a team of Playworkers to work with local children.**

The Trust is offering free places on a three-day accredited
Level 1 Playwork course to individuals seeking to
develop their skills and qualifications. Training takes
place on 4th-6th June 2024, 9.30-4pm daily.

Applicants should be aged 14+yrs and will
be required to assist holiday activities at
Abergavenny Community Centre.

To apply email: aber.hub@gmail.com

Closing date 30th April.

Enquiries: 07751 666481.

Abergavenny Community Centre,
Merthyr Road, Abergavenny, NP7 5BY.
Reg Charity No. 1177133.





Building a Team of Playworkers for the Whole Town

Playwork is a fun, dynamic approach to facilitating children's play and supporting their individual needs.

Before we talk about the training let's take a look back to set the scene. The Abergavenny Community Trust is the charity which operates Abergavenny Community Centre - it promotes sustainable behaviour, encourages participation and social inclusion, supports families in their various forms and facilitates educational, social, welfare, leisure and recreational activities to enable people to mix.

The Abergavenny Community Centre (occupying the former Infant School above Merthyr Road) is a community space which functions chiefly by bringing people together to do everyday things that keep more of us active and involved in communal life for longer. There's a small part time staff team supported by committed volunteers who come regularly to help at Friday coffee morning, lunches, gardening, toddlers group, dementia friendship cafe, singing, chair yoga, knitting club

and monthly Sunday afternoon teas. Running in tandem, the Trust has been growing and developing its 'Supporting Families' work too.

The Centre is known for the offer of meaningful and practical activities which aim to broaden and enrich childhood experiences. Currently, 120 families make up the combined half term, summer holiday, 'hands-on cooking' and community kids' registers - with 102 children (3-16yrs) participating in outdoor learning & play, art club and 'cooking for life' activities last summer. Demand is growing for these activities and while we know families would welcome more - and we would like to offer more - our capacity has limitations and we can't do it alone. The Centre tries to ease this gap by identifying and working with trusted partners, individuals and groups, like the Abergavenny Origami Club who share our values and has the ability to draw on a network of individuals who willingly give time by sharing their craft, in a timeless tradition. Thirty children and family members came along to their Autumn session.

As the saying goes 'it takes a whole village to raise a child' so after publicly testing the desire for building a team of local playworkers as a resource for the whole town, we were committed. Funding can be a stumbling block to getting ideas off the ground but in this case we are pleased to announce that between Abergavenny Town Council, Abergavenny Rotary Club and private donors we have sourced a training provider and the date is set. The Trust is grateful to these generous funders and we are reminded that we live in a spirited, connected place where goodwill can thrive.

If you have an interest in working in the childcare or / and community sectors please accept this invitation and apply. The skills, experience and qualification gained will be yours to take away, and while this local investment is made more widely in the interests of safeguarding children and families, the only request is that successful applicants give some time and energy to helping Abergavenny Community Centre. We look forward to receiving your application. Thank you.

Marion Pearce

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The Tithe Barn Community Wellbeing Café



Crafting 4 Cancer has successfully been running in The Tithe Barn for the past 6 years, supporting people whose lives have been affected by Cancer. Through creative and meaningful crafting activities, the group offers both emotional and social benefits.

The group have become self-reliant, supported by a small group of volunteers. They have made themselves financially viable and sustainable through selling the crafts they create and running a small café every Tuesday.

Now, an opportunity has arisen to extend the use of the Tithe Barn and to set up a Community Wellbeing Café to support the local community.

Working with the Community

The Community Wellbeing Café will work in partnership with a variety of organisations across Abergavenny and the surrounding area to create an environment and venue that supports community gathering and meets the needs of individuals within our community. The Community Café will provide

a venue where groups, advice services, therapies and resources can come together to share information and network.

The team will be holding an open event on Tuesday 23 April 2023. The aim of this event is to engage the local community and gather its views and ideas on what the Community Café could look like. This event will be supported by Monmouthshire County Council and GAVO and will run all day between 10.30 and 3.30 pm - please call in and meet the team and share your ideas. Teas, coffee, and cake will be available.

Volunteer Recruitment

The event will also be an opportunity to recruit additional volunteers from across the community who would be willing to give their time to help support the startup and continued running of the café. If you feel you could contribute to this exciting project, please come along and help shape the future development of your community café.

Karen Smith, Crafting 4 Cancer

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The Big Black Mountain Challenge



Many of you may recall the wonderful community response to help find my husband Huw Morgan when he went missing on the Little Skirrid on Dec 10th 2021. With the amazing help of Longtown Mountain Rescue Team (LMRT), he was found 22 hours later safe and alive. Here's a photo of us together on holiday last year, (above).

My family will forever be grateful to the Mountain Rescue team for finding Huw. As a response to help show my gratitude, I have decided to enter the Annual Longtown Mountain Rescue Sponsored Walk on Saturday May 11th 2024 called the Big Black Mountain Challenge. Seven Abergavenny walking friends will be joining me doing the 20km route starting and finishing at Llanthony Priory.

Abergavenny Focus has published several articles showcasing some of the amazing rescues the Longtown Team have done. They are a registered charity who rely on donations to cover the £30,000

annual operating costs they have. All team members give up their time voluntarily and receive no payment or expenses. However, it is an expensive operation to run, having the equipment, vehicles and support facilities to potentially save lives.

This sponsored walk is one of their main annual fundraising activities. If you would like to support LMRT, please consider sponsoring our walking team.

Some of us are over 70 so it is quite a challenge and we are currently going on practice walks. We have a Justgiving Fundraising page which you can reach by scanning the QR code below.

Alternatively, do email me on marynepal@gmail.co.uk and I can send you the link or answer any questions you have. Thanks so much for considering sponsoring us.

Mary Morgan



2024

ABERWritingFEST

19th - 20th April 2024



Alex Wharton, Children's Laureate for Wales

The Abergavenny Writing Festival returns this April from 19-20th April at the Kings Arms

Hotel, the Melville Centre for the Arts and Abergavenny Library. The event is made possible with the support of Arts Council Wales, National Lottery funding, Abergavenny Town Council, Christie Residential, Abergavenny Rotary Club and The Kings Arms.

There's a strong line-up of writing for wellbeing workshops, including Laura Sheldon's 'Yin Yoga and Poetry session', in which yoga postures will be used to explore how to unlock creativity. Robert Walton and Bethany Handley will run a creative writing workshop called 'Crossing Boundaries: Nature and Wellbeing.' These sessions are suitable for all, from complete beginner to professional writer.

There will be a hybrid open-mic on the evening of Friday 19th April, hosted by Dominic Williams, with closed captioning and BSL interpretation for the performance. To participate or find out more please contact dominic@write4word.org.

There are also talks for those who would like to take their writing to the next level: 'Making a living

from writing: the good, the bad, and the ugly', in which Tim Lebbon will talk about his career as a professional writer, working on novels, screenplays, comics, audio dramas and computer games, and how to balance art and commerce. Liz Knight will give a session packed full with advice: from developing an idea, pitching, writing and publishing your book, sharing tips of what (and what not) to do to make your idea turn into reality.

A special treat for youngsters, and their families, with award-winning author, poet and playwright Owen Sheers giving a family story session from his children's book 'Drew, Moo and Bunny too'. The book was created with and raises funds for The Drew Barker-Wright Charity.



Owen Sheers and his children's book 'Drew, Moo and Bunny too'



Keve F Sutherland will offer a Comic Art Masterclass. Kev has written and drawn for Beano, Doctor Who and Marvel comics, and now makes graphic novels adapted from Shakespeare.

Alex Wharton, Children's Laureate for Wales, will be giving a workshop on Saturday 20th April.



Folk singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist, Angeline Morrison

Liz Pearce will continue her successful 'Women's Words' workshop series, originally launched at the Abergavenny Writing Festival.

The winners of the Youth Writing Competition will be presented with their certificates by Deputy Mayor Ben Callard and receive mentoring sessions from some of Wales's top writers.

Angeline Morrison will be performing as part of the finale night. Angeline is a folk singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist whose 2022 album The Sorrow Songs : Folk Songs of Black British Experience was No 1 Folk Album of the year in The Guardian.

For more information visit <https://abergavennywritingfestival.com/> or follow on Facebook, Instagram or X.



Professional writer, Tim Lebbon

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41st Annual Show



Photos from last year's show
Photo credit Ann Seymour Photography

Photography by Ann Seymour Photography

The South Wales Shire Horse Society's Annual Show was first held on the Royal Welsh Showground in 1984, before moving to Bailey Park, Abergavenny in 1985. The Show date is always the first Saturday in July. Since its inception it has gone from strength to strength.

Thanks to the dedicated men and women who love the Shire Horse, we get entries for the show from many parts of England and of course Wales!

The committee do sterling work to promote the show and ensure that all the exhibitors return home with an enjoyable day to reflect on.

Bailey Park as some of you will be aware is a very picturesque site with lots of tall trees to provide shade when needed.

We have certain classes on the day in which other heavy horses can take part, such as Suffolk Punch, Cleveland Bay and Clydesdales. All these breeds are very much at risk as are the Shires.

If you decide to come to our show you will be most welcome. On show day we try to please everyone. We have classes for Miniature horses, many owners support us each year. Other attractions include pony rides, a Punch and Judy show and many others, some still to be confirmed at the time of writing.

We have a number of dedicated people with catering stalls and many interesting trade and craft stands.

For the canine lovers there is also a Dog Show, which is always very popular.

So WELCOME one and all to the South Wales Shire Horse Society at Bailey Park on Saturday 6th July 2024. You will have a wonderful day, there really is something for all the family.

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PLAY/GROUND

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Our Plot: a New Community Garden at Peak Cymru



Peak Cymru is an arts organisation based in the Black Mountains. We work from two sites: The Old School, Crickhowell and a small reading room on Platform 2 of Abergavenny train station. Through young people's programmes (14-30 years), community collaborations and artist residencies, we explore the unique qualities of our region including the Black Mountains, the Welsh Borders and Vale of Usk.

This year, we're developing a community garden for the former playground and car park of The Old School, Crickhowell. Over the past three months we've been working with a small group of Young People from our previous programmes to develop a set of principles to creatively steer the garden. Young People told us they want the garden to be: 'a place to grow things we love', 'an artist's studio', 'to not have any clocks' and to be 'allowed to be imperfect'!

This Spring, we launch *Play/Ground* – a series of creative workshops for 14-18 year olds to experiment with artistic and design practices and to learn green skills. Hosted by artist and designer Sahra Hersi, and working alongside a variety of creative practitioners, designers, farmers and ecologists, the group will meet every month between May and October to imagine and design an element of the community garden. Alongside this, a parallel programme, *Our Plot*, will host regular sessions for local residents of all ages to join a range of creative and therapeutic activities, working towards an Autumn harvest feast.

We look forward to sharing this growing space with as many people as possible throughout the coming seasons, and to celebrate nature, creativity and collaboration in all its forms. To get in involved with either group, please email polly@peak.cymru.

Each Young Person taking in *Play/Ground* is offered a bursary to support travel and expenses.

This project is supported by Powys Making a Difference Fund, The Ashley Family Foundation and Awards for All.



Website: www.peakcymru.org
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Hello from the AAF Committee!

The Abergavenny Arts Festival is a non-profit CIC that runs a free arts festival each June.

This year, the free Festival of Arts will be taking place in Abergavenny Castle on Saturday June 15th, from 10am to 8pm.

We will be running free workshops for children and adults at the festival, and will be running several fundraising events in order for us to provide these.

We would love for you all to come along, and/or to share the events with your friends and family!

Here is the current list:

**SATURDAY 13TH APRIL
QUIZ NIGHT & FISH 'N CHIP
SUPPER*** At The Greyhound
Vaults, plus a raffle!

Quiz begins 7:30pm, with food served at half time. (*please enquire at venue regarding dietary requirements)

Tickets are £12 per person, kindly being arranged and sold by The Greyhound Vaults – you can call them directly or email us for the booking link. Venue telephone: 01873 858549 Email: abergavennyartsfestival@gmail.com

**THURSDAY 25TH APRIL
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Small door entry with complimentary glass of wine and nibbles, and an opportunity to snap up some wonderful bargains – just like Vinted but on your doorstep!

**SATURDAY MAY 4TH
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"HOW HAVE ARTS AND CRAFTS
BEEN THERAPEUTIC FOR YOU?"**

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Hannah Hill will comper the evening, asking the panel questions and then opening it up to the audience to discuss.

Doors 6:30 for 7pm start:. The bar will be open. Tickets £10 per person, available by emailing abergavennyartsfestival@gmail.com

**DATE TBC
MUSIC NIGHT AT KHAVE CAFÉ BAR**
Boulant will host one of his regular and popular gig events and donating proceeds to the free workshops too. Please keep an eye on our socials and website for more information.

This year, we are also introducing the Abergavenny Fringe Festival, to open the event to the whole town, and all participants will be mentioned in our Programme, both paper and website copies, as a Supporter or Sponsor. This includes the new Window Art Trail, June 1st to 16th.

All businesses in town will be receiving a letter inviting them to take part.

We also need Volunteer Stewards on the day – please email for details!

Thank you in advance... it is going to a fantastic community event!

Emma Bevan-Henderson, Chair of AAF

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ABER LAUGH

“I wanted to bring some of the best comedians from the Welsh circuit and beyond to Abergavenny.”

Aberlaugh Standup comedy night has been running in the Kings Arms Hotel every month for almost 2 years. This popular fixture is regularly fully booked and receives great feedback. Every event has a variety of superb comedians, a laid-back comedy club atmosphere, plenty of laughs and time for drinks at the bar. As well as the regular monthly events in the Kings Arms Hotel, Aberlaugh is also running a larger event three times a year at the Borough Theatre, the most recent entertaining over 150 people.

The events are run by Abergavenny born comedian Huw Davies; “Having gigged all over Wales, it was clear that fans of comedy in Abergavenny had to travel to Bristol or Cardiff

for regular stand-up events. I wanted to bring some of the best comedians from the Welsh circuit and beyond to Abergavenny. We regularly have comedians who have performed at some of the biggest clubs in the UK, but we also give opportunities to emerging talent to gain valuable experience.”

Aberlaugh is branching out and running new nights in Hereford, Newport and Cwmbran. They were part of the recent Black Mountain Comedy Festival and have provided comedy for other events such as weddings.

You can catch Aberlaugh for their next Abergavenny events at the Kings Arms Hotel on the 22nd of April and the 20th May. They will also be at the Borough Theatre on June the 20th.

Tickets for Aberlaugh at the Kings Arms are available via Aberlaugh social media two weeks before the event.

Tickets for Aberlaugh at the Borough Theatre are released via the Borough Theatre www.boroughtheatreabergavenny.co.uk

Follow @Aberlaugh on Facebook and Instagram for more details about all events or to contact for bookings.





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Bluebells in Bloom



Legend has it that a field or wood full of bluebells is intricately woven with fairy enchantments, with fairies trapping anyone passing by, particularly children. It's unsurprising that a wealth of folklore surrounds these flowers, given that carpets of flowering bluebells are one of the most beautiful events in nature's calendar.

There are two types of bluebell to be found in the UK – native bluebells and Spanish bluebells and April & May are the time to get out and see them. They are a distinctive deep violet-blue flower with a nodding head and petal tips that curl back.

The best places to find bluebells are in ancient woodlands where a rich habitat supports a range of species. Bluebells

are important flowers for bees, hoverflies and butterflies, which feed on their nectar.

LOCALLY, THESE ARE SOME OF THE PLACES WHERE YOU CAN FIND BLUEBELLS:

Skirrid Fawr, a National Trust wood



Clytha Estate, a National Trust wood

Coed Cefn, a Woodland Trust wood

Llangattock Beechwood, Brecon Beacons National Park

Bluebells Factoids!

In the Bronze Age, bluebell 'glue' was used to attach feathers to arrows

The Victorians used the starch from crushed bluebells to stiffen the ruffs of their collars and sleeves

Bluebell sap was used to bind pages to the spines of books

According to folklore, to hear a bluebell ring is a sign of impending death!



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APRIL 2024 EVENTS CALENDAR

30TH MARCH

LLANFOIST VILLAGE HALL EASTER FUN DAY

2pm-5pm, Llanfoist Village Hall, Church Lane, Llanfoist
£2 per child

30TH MARCH

BREAKFAST WITH THE EASTER BUNNY

Breakfast, egg hunt, games and craft. 10.30am-12.30pm, Penypound Clubhouse. Tickets £10 from info@atfc.club

2ND – 7TH APRIL

CHEPSTOW WALKING FESTIVAL



Join Chepstow's annual celebration as a Walkers are Welcome town.
www.walksinchestow.co.uk

3RD APRIL

ABERGAVENNY FIFTYPLUS GROUP

Guest speaker Steve Bendell will talk about Bloodbike Wales – a total band of volunteers who give their time freely to transport specimens, blood, human donor milk for babies etc from hospital to hospital.
2pm, Trinity Hall Baker Street, Abergavenny. All Welcome

3RD APRIL

Book-ish Event AN EVENING WITH ERIN KELLY & C.L. TAYLOR



Erin Kelly and C.L. Taylor will be discussing *The House of Mirrors*, and *The Guilty Couple*. All tickets include a glass of wine or soft drink upon arrival.
Tickets £10-£35 7:30pm, *The Loft at Book-ish*, 18 High St, Crickhowell
Book-ish.co.uk/events

7TH APRIL

WYE VALLEY SLOT CAR CLUB SPRING RALLY

Rules are to be to Slot rally UK regs. Classic, 80's/90's and Modern classes. Can enter up to 4 cars. £5 per car. 6/7 stages including MDF, Ninco and Policar stages. Trophies for top 3 in each class. Plus top Ninco and SCX. Snacks and drinks available all day. *Doors open at 8.30am – 4pm, 1 Hatherleigh Place, Union Road, Abergavenny*

12TH APRIL

Llanfoist Village Hall Film Night THE MIRACLE CLUB (PG-13)

There's just one dream for the women of Ballygar to taste freedom: to win a pilgrimage to the sacred French town of Lourdes.
Doors open 7pm, Films start at 7.30pm; Bar available. Tickets £5 for adults or £3 for children; to be bought at the door. Church Lane, Llanfoist

12TH APRIL

BAT WALK ON CASTLE MEADOWS

Join members of the MonLife Team and the Friends of Castle Meadows for this fascinating walk on the

Castle Meadows, Abergavenny. Why do bats come out at night? Why do they hang upside down? Which is the smallest bat? What do they eat? Find out the answers to these questions and lots more! We will hopefully see bats and have a chance to use electronic bat detectors which will allow us to hear them in flight. Bring a torch and come with suitable clothing and footwear for a walk in the park in the dark!
Meet Lower Byefield car park off Tudor Street in Abergavenny at 7.45pm. finish by 9.15pm

17-20TH APRIL

AAODS presents: THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME



AAODS perform this epic tale of passion, hope and redemption at the Borough Theatre. With music by Alan Menken and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz, the show is based on the 1831 novel by Victor Hugo, with songs from the 1996 Disney movie of the same name. The musical follows Quasimodo, and his yearning to explore the outside world and be accepted by society, against the wishes of his cruel, puritanical foster father Claude Frolo, who also wants to exterminate Paris' Roma population. Quasimodo longs to be with other people, leading to his chance encounter with the enchanting Gypsy Esmeralda. When the beautiful young woman catches the attention of Frolo, Quasimodo must help to keep her out of his clutches.
Tickets £15 (£14 Concessions) 7pm, Borough Theatre, Abergavenny
Boroughtheatreabergavenny.co.uk
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19TH-20TH APRIL

ABERGAVENNY WRITING FESTIVAL

The Abergavenny Writing Festival is about encouraging everyone to write and express themselves. Whether for mental health and wellbeing, as a way of making a living, to bring about change, to keep a record or simply for pleasure. There will be 2 days packed with events for all ages and abilities. See our article on Page 14 & 15 for more info

**20TH APRIL
REPAIR CAFÉ**

We repair household items, electrical and otherwise. (no microwaves) manual bicycles safety check. Appointment essential for woodwork, jewellery, and electronic (no sentimental/antique teddys or dolls please). Sewing repairs – advice only for zips and alterations. Labour free (donations welcome). Please note parts are not supplied and items can't be left. Our object is to keep repairable items out of landfill. Book, enquire or drop in. Contact repaircafeabergavenny@

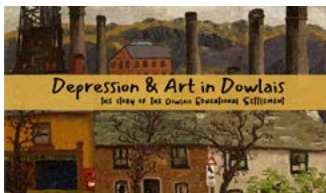
gmail.com and Facebook messenger. 11am-2pm, Abergavenny Community Centre, Merthyr Road. Car parking available (off Meryth Rd)

**22ND APRIL
ABER LAUGH**

Kings Arms Hotel, Abergavenny
See our article on Page 23 for more info

**23RD APRIL
COMMUNITY WELLBEING CAFÉ
OPEN EVENT**

10.30am-3.30pm, Tithe Barn, Abergavenny
See article on Page 9 for info

**24TH APRIL
Abergavenny Local History Society Talk
CHRISTOPHER PARRY**

Christopher Parry's talk is on Painting in Dowlais in the Depression. Free to Abergavenny Local History Society members. £15 for ticket & membership for non-members. See Page 59 for more info. 7.30pm, Borough Theatre, Abergavenny
Boroughtheatreabergavenny.co.uk

**6TH MAY
ABERGAVENNY TOY & TRAIN
COLLECTORS FAIR**

Come along and join us for another great family day out at the Toy & Train Collectors Fair 2024. With an amazing array of vintage vehicles,

wonderful toy display and amazing collectables for sale, it's a great day out for all the family!
10am – 4pm, Abergavenny Market Hall

LOOKING AHEAD**26TH AND 27TH MAY
ABERGAVENNY STEAM RALLY**

More info in next month's magazine. Visit abergavennysteamrally.co.uk for details

**6TH JULY
SOUTH WALES SHIRE HORSE SHOW**

Bailey Park Abergavenny
See Page 16-17

SHARE YOUR EVENTS

Go to thefocus.wales/calendar

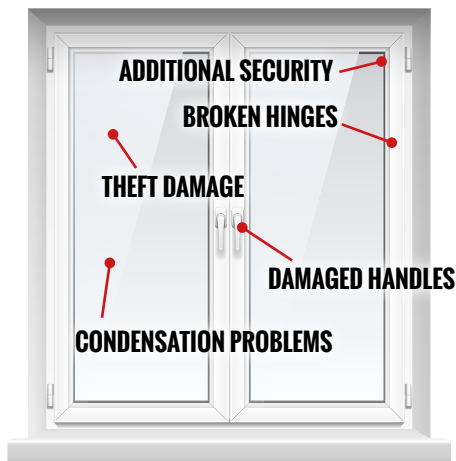
A Note about Events

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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April Weather Outlook

by Jonathan Powell

Photo: Tredillion Park

With the new season fully into its stride, we can expect April to produce some temperatures to reflect the time as we slowly edge toward summer. However, general weather conditions for this second month of spring look anything but settled. Therefore, rain is very much on the agenda with some lengthy spells in the offing with at times, some strong winds. However, some settled spells also in the mix allowing for early flowering and general colour in the lengthening hours of daylight. In such conditions, some pleasant values with the backdrop of blue skies. It is possible that the pattern we see for April could well be the blueprint for May as well. April is expected to return average to above average rainfall, with temperatures above the average for the month.

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Parrys 20th Birthday Celebrations

And now to the future and hopefully, the next 20 years...



You may recall I wrote an article a few weeks ago covering the changes within estate agency in terms of additional information now required under the Consumer Protection Act, Parts B and C for Estate Agents. Essentially all sellers are obliged to disclose any material facts relating to the property they are going to sell and agents must carry out as much due diligence as possible. This will take more time at the outset preparing a property to launch to the open market but hopefully, this approach will, hopefully, ensure there are no surprises during the conveyancing process. The more information available at the outset will also provide the seller and agent to speak to the sellers' solicitor about any potential issues that may arise and ensure these are dealt with before a buyer is found.

So Parrys 20th birthday celebrations have been and gone. We had a super day celebrating with clients and as a team, a few photos here capture the fun we had.



Although we have introduced some technology over the past 20 years, we are looking to upgrade this significantly to try and avoid duplication and streamline the process. At the moment, we ask our sellers to complete a Property

Information Questionnaire (paper based) as part of the pre-market process, the sellers subsequently complete lengthy legal property information forms with their solicitor. We also download a Land Registry Title and Plan of the property to be sold and go through any covenants or restrictions and check the boundary plan and to confirm the registered owners. And finally, we ask our sellers to provide their Identification documents so we can comply with HMRC Anti Money Laundering legislation which requires estate agents to confirm the identity of sellers.

We are introducing a system where the seller will complete forms at the outset that are based upon the legal forms, hopefully reducing duplication and providing the sellers' solicitor with completed forms at the early part of the process. The new technology will allow the seller to download and confirm the Land Registry information is correct and also to confirm their identity. There will still be paper based forms and systems for people who would prefer to provide information this way.

This is just one example of technology we are introducing, however, our business is about people and our aim is to make us more efficient 'behind the scenes' to allow us more time to focus on our clients.

Our Showroom

We are very proud of our showroom and offices located in the historic Nevill Street opposite St John's Square with some fantastic small businesses as our neighbours. Last year we upgraded our showroom enhancing the historic features with oak panelling and re-designing so the showroom is a

comfortable environment where our clients, potential buyers and future clients can call in and discuss their property needs either sitting on the squishy sofa or in a private office. We have signed a new 10 year lease so have committed to a presence in Abergavenny town, we love being part of the community and are passionate about playing our part in keeping our beautiful town thriving whilst embracing change as our business evolves.



Our Team

The Parrys team all live and work locally, we have a wealth of experience within the team and importantly, a range of skills. Again, as the world changes, we are not all comfortable on camera presenting social media videos, we are not all able to use technology to its fullest, we are not all good at writing sales particulars, we are not all good at design and marketing, we are not all good at negotiating and progressing sales, but as a team, we have all these skills. We invest time and money in training, completing our Continuous Professional Development as required by the professional organisations of whom we are members and keeping on top of new legislation, local and national market trends, local planning applications – we want to be the team you can turn to when looking for advice about selling or renting your home.

Do watch this space over the coming months, we have a number of plans and projects, all with the aim of ensuring that our sellers, buyers, landlords and contract holders enjoy a smoother property journey and achieve their home moving hopes and dreams.

Change can be daunting, exhausting, fun and exciting. To quote Winston Churchill,



“To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often”

And whilst we cannot claim to be perfect, at Parrys we want to be 'Ahead of the Curve'.

Heather Cook



Ahead of the curve



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We take great pride in producing The Focus each month and championing local businesses and what they do. Our area is, thankfully, full of local business gems for us to enjoy, but they need our continued support to ensure their survival. Plenty of us trot out phrases like 'use it or lose it' and 'support local,' but do we really know what they mean and do we live by those ideals?

As well as promoting the local businesses on our doorstep, it wouldn't be right to do so without reminding you WHY it is so important to support them.

Here are just a few good reasons why...

RECIRCULATION

When you shop locally and use local services, you pump money back into your community. For every £10 that you spend locally, £3.85 is recirculated within the community, helping preservation of the local economy.

EMPLOYMENT

Local retailers tend to look locally for suppliers and producers where they can. This means local farmers, manufacturers and service companies stay in business. In turn this creates local jobs

and a better, more prosperous community.

PRESERVING THE HIGH STREET

If you do not shop locally, your town risks becoming a ghost town which means people have no alternative but to look to major national supermarkets and online giants for purchases. Keeping your local businesses up and running means that they can generate revenue to support local council services, like schools, parks, roads, libraries and many other services that make your community a better place to live.

CARBON FOOTPRINT

It stands to reason that when you shop locally, you travel less distance. Often people walk or cycle locally and therefore significantly reduce traffic congestion and air pollution, all of which benefits our local environment.

COST V QUALITY

More often than not, many of the same goods are available at your local stores, be it at the butchers, bakers or greengrocers. These products are of a similar if not lower price but far fresher and better quality than that of the major national supermarkets.

PERSONAL SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

Local people usually run small local shops – these people know you and your community! A friendly face and a chat are what people need to feel socially connected and is good for mental health, especially for groups such as the elderly or vulnerable who may not have lots of social interaction. When your shopkeeper knows you and what you like, they can recommend things especially for you, meaning you get a tailored shopping experience!

BESPOKE LOCAL PRODUCE

When you shop local, you may have more choice than you think as they often stock items that aren't available at the major supermarkets. Some of these items are unique and locally sourced, offering you originality and typical local fare not found elsewhere in the country.

HUMANITY IN OUR COMMUNITY

Each town and village across the country witnessed great acts of humanity and charity from within its community throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. The organising of food banks at the village/town halls, local shops and businesses donating food and help for the elderly and vulnerable, ordinary people offering delivery services and general help to others less able or fortunate. This happens when there is a community spirit, a sense of belonging in one's community. Local shops and business are part of the glue that holds it all together. When they are lost, so too is the community spirit and, and, sadly, a sense of humanity with it.

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it is a single blind or a large country manor house they have the capacity, experience and attention to detail to ensure the finish you wish to achieve is exactly how you envision. It is these high standards of friendly, knowledgeable and professional service, refined over four decades, that sets Jaybee's apart.

Jaybee's also offer a supply only fabric service for those who like to make their own curtains and blinds or upholstery. Upstairs in the showroom you'll find an Aladdin's cave of remnants, small rolls and ex-display show lengths, heavily discounted from current prices, ideal for all budding craft enthusiasts.

Whether starting your renovation journey or wanting to add a little injection of personal style make Jaybee Soft Furnishings a place.

"We feel honoured to be a recognisable face in our wonderful town of Abergavenny and have a huge amount of returning customers and recommendations. We had started the business on the foundations of professional service, knowledge and exceptionally high standards and these principals still stand strong today. We are sure you will not be disappointed and look forward to welcoming you."

Recently reported as one of Abergavenny's most successful family businesses, Jaybee Soft Furnishings brings a wealth of experience in making bespoke soft furnishings a wonderful event for your home. Established over 45 years ago by John and Judith Bannon, Jaybee's has grown steadily from humble beginnings into a recognisable name not only on Abergavenny high street but as a leading light in the soft furnishings industry UK wide.

Today, Jaybee's has the second generation of the family business at the helm with Pippa Prosser (John & Judith's daughter) and her husband Matthew. They pride themselves on their quality and service having a highly skilled team of curtain makers specialising in bespoke hand-crafted window treatments, providing exceptional quality made-to-measure soft furnishings with an expert measuring and full installation service. They offer all types of window dressings including, curtains, custom-made pelmets, bespoke headboards, all

types of blinds, tracks and poles. In addition to this, they provide an extensive range of wallpaper, Little Greene Paint and a first class re-upholstery service for both modern and antique furniture. Offering fabrics from all the major design houses, including those at London's Chelsea Harbour, Jaybee's has an impressive pattern book collection which would exceed most countrywide and is available to browse six days a week.

Jaybee's pride themselves in their patient personal service, working with you to understand requirements and help you to reach the right decision for your home or place of work. Whether



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Louise Collis, Landscape Painter



Louise Collis is a landscape painter based in Abergavenny who usually paints 'en plein air' in oils. Watching the view change in front of her, she chases the light and tries to get as much of the atmosphere of the location into her colourful lively paintings as possible.

She splits her week by painting on location in the first half of the week then returning to the studio to finish the plein air paintings and work on commissions. Louise welcomes visitors to her studio/gallery every Thursday, Friday and Saturday and loves nothing more than taking a break from painting to chat to visitors.

"My studio is a compact, calming space, full of colour. I'm always working on something, whether it's a commission, finishing a plein air piece or just painting a stack of frames for my next exhibition".

"Abergavenny is such an inspiring place to be based. The community is full of creative and interesting people and there's always an event to be part of. We're surrounded by beautiful countryside, full of changing colour. The mountains each have a distinct character and I never tire of painting them"



"It's a busy year ahead. I'll be dropping off new paintings to galleries this month, working towards a solo exhibition at Victoria Fearn Gallery Rhiwbina, exhibiting for a day at the Hay Festival, and as always I'll be taking part in the Crickhowell Open Studios during Spring Bank Holiday 25-27 May when there'll be even more to see in my studio".

You can follow Louise on social media @louisecollisartist and browse and buy paintings, cards and prints online www.louisecollis.com

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R E S I D E N T I A L



April 1st 2024 is a very big day for the team at Christie Residential. April Fools' Day takes a back seat this year as we instead celebrate 20 years since we first opened our doors, trading as Surehomes Estate Agents. Ten years on, 2014's rebrand to Christie Residential was an opportunity for a complete overhaul of our livery but not our professional ethos. This has remained resolutely unchanged over the last two decades, which is to provide exceptional service, sound professional advice and a friendly welcome from all our team at our office at 53 Cross Street.

We didn't start life in 2004 with such illustrious neighbours such as the Angel Hotel and Alison Tod, with Managing Director, Philip Christie opening the doors from the much humbler home at 17 Market Street. Very quickly our reputation and business grew and with that the need for a more prominent shopfront and larger office became paramount, leading us to move to our current home in June 2007. From there we have continued to grow both the sales and lettings elements of the business, becoming one of Abergavenny's most successful and respected estate agencies. From plucky newcomers to part

of the Establishment in 20 years has been a fantastic team effort with Philip building a group of professionals around him with over 100 years of collective estate agency experience. Branch Manager, Brychan Todd, has been with the company for 14 years, with Property Administrator, Lucy Jones beating this with 15 years of service. The consistency of the team has been a feature of Christie Residential's success, with longstanding colleagues, Beverley Nel (Lettings Manager), Zoe Anderson (Finance) and Simon English (Marketing) being joined more recently by Andrew Tattersfield (Senior

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS

Property Consultant) and Libby Watkins (Property Administrator). In addition, we have also forged long-standing business relationships with numerous solicitors, surveyors, financial advisors and local tradespeople as well as many members of the local business community.

20 years has inevitably seen a great deal of change and no little turbulence. Having successfully navigated the devastating 2008 global financial crisis, the Company moved forward with renewed confidence and optimism resulting in year-on-year growth. 2014's re-brand to Christie Residential successfully provided an updated, smarter look commensurate to the experience and talents of the team and broadened our appeal to all areas of the market. Inevitably Covid needs a mention. This shared experience tested everybody in so many ways and posed unique challenges for an industry largely based on meeting people and direct face-to-face contact.

Facetime viewings proved to be no substitute for the real thing, and thankfully we eventually got back to doing what we all love to do - engaging with people 'in the flesh'. Because Christie Residential is very much about word of mouth and creating strong, long-lasting relationships with our community.

We are so fortunate to be able to work within the environment that we do. Abergavenny, Crickhowell and the surrounding villages are all relatively small communities, that are not only friendly but

welcoming to visitors and as near-perfectly formed as any place can be. They are almost a blueprint for what buyers want in a post Covid world and it is no surprise that these areas appear regularly in the annual polls of 'The Most Desirable Places To Live In The UK'. That the landscape that surrounds us is breathtakingly beautiful is a given, and this has always brought people to the area from all over the country and further afield who feel a natural affinity with it. But Abergavenny and Crickhowell are also both culturally rich, independently minded towns. At Christie Residential we are confident that our own independent approach coupled with our extensive local knowledge have been the key to the success of the last 20 years.

Rather than rest on our laurels, the aim is to use this celebratory moment not just to look back fondly at what has been achieved but also as a springboard for the next chapter. Christie

Residential has always been a avid supporter of community initiatives whether charitable or cultural. As the founding sponsor of the increasingly popular *Abergavenny Writing Festival*, now in its 8th year of celebrating the written word, we are pleased to yet again support this year's event which is filled with an extensive programme of activities for all ages. We are also busy establishing a number of partnerships with various local youth sporting clubs and organisations and hope to be able to make further announcements regarding these throughout this year. All these relationships illustrate a fundamental truth about what we do; Estate Agency is very much about people and community and that's why all the team at Christie Residential love what we do. A sincere thank you to all our past and present clients who have helped us on our incredible journey so far and here's to the next 20 years.



Then and Now: Philip Christie of Surehomes, and now Christie Residential



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3 Circles Care opened its doors for business in June 2013.

The Director and RI is Heidi Charlton. She is responsible for ensuring that the company abides by legislation and is run in an efficient and ethical manner.

Heidi was born in Talgarth but spent many years living in London. After her mother's death in 2012, Heidi and her husband moved back to Wales. It was largely due to the reluctance of Heidi's father

to involve outside agencies in the care of her mother that inspired Heidi to set up 3 Circles Care. She aims to provide the standard of care and consistency of service that she would have wanted for her own mother.

Heidi's aim is to provide excellent care. She is aware that staff may make mistakes but is firm in her belief that problems will be dealt with and learned from rather than being "brushed under the carpet".

Whether you are looking for extra help around the home, assistance with personal care, or an alternative to hospital admission, Heidi knows that there is nothing quite like being in your own home.

3 Circles' Care at Home service offers you the choice to remain independent in the comfort of your own home, enabling your family and friends to be directly involved with your care, without compromising on quality of care.

Heidi's experience has taught her the need for professionalism in the provision of care. 3 Circles Care only recruits staff with suitable and verifiable references and a clear DBS check. Our clients can therefore be confident that our staff have been properly assessed and trained and are competent to perform their assigned roles.

Heidi believes that her high standards of professionalism and quality of service mean that 3 Circles Care offers an attractive package that is fair to employees and clients alike.

Contact us:
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make a difference to the use of the garden.

How can I ensure I use my garden in all weathers and longer summers?

Using a canopy creatively whether it's a retractable awning, louvred pergola or veranda allows you to effectively control how and when you use the space.

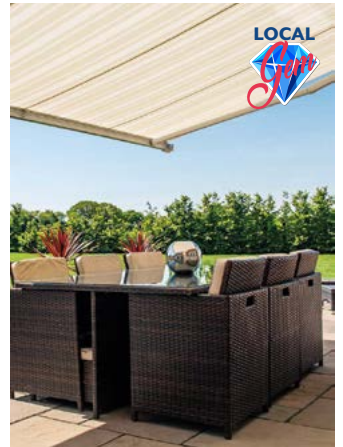
A young family may opt for an awning to provide shade for children to play under during the summer days with the benefit of rain protection; this covered space can also be used to relax or entertain under with family and friends.

An older couple or family may look more towards an aluminium veranda to create a covered area whilst still being able to enjoy the sun. A rotating louvred pergola allows you to control the amount of sun or shade with rain protection by adding heating and lighting options to both further enhance the use of the outside area from early spring to early autumn and long into the summer evenings.

How can I make better use of my garden?

The key is to look at the potential use for an existing space. For instance adding a veranda, awning or pergola to a patio or decking area adjacent to the house lets the indoor space flow through to the outside effectively increasing the usable space, adding value without major changes to the home.

Also look at those areas of your garden that maybe get the sun at different times of the day or are currently neglected and think about how a simple composite deck can create a new area. Sometimes these areas only need to be big enough for a table and chairs for a summer weekend breakfast or a couple of loungers for a lazy summer evening and



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Raisin & Walnut Biscotti

I'm a big lover of freshly ground coffee and these little bites make a perfect accompaniment, plus they are not too high in calories! They only take a few minutes to make although, as they are double baked, a little more patience is required in the baking. A wait that's well worth it!

INGREDIENTS

- 175g plain flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 100g caster sugar
- 1 large egg plus 1 egg white (reserve a teaspoon of egg white for glazing)
- 1/2 tsp vanilla essence
- 60g chopped walnuts
- 40g raisins

1. Preheat your oven to 180C/Fan 160C/Gas 4.
2. In a large bowl mix together the flour, baking powder and sugar. Then add the chopped walnuts and raisins
3. In a separate bowl beat the whole egg, egg white (not forgetting to have reserved a teaspoon for glaze) and the vanilla essence
4. Pour into the dry mixture and mix with a wooden spoon, bringing it together with your hands until it all comes together to form a stiff dough.
5. On a well floured board roll the mixture into a fat sausage about 25cm long
6. Place on a lined baking tray and flatten the dough slightly, you want it to be about 2cm high
7. Brush with the teaspoon of reserved egg white and bake in the oven for approx 25-30 mins. The dough should be risen and firm but pale in colour
8. Remove from the oven and leave on the baking tray to cool for 10 minutes
9. Turn down the oven to 140C/Fan 120C/Gas 1
10. With a bread knife slice the cooled dough into 1cm slices and place back onto the baking tray for approx 25 minutes until lightly browned
11. Leave to cool and to crisp up
12. Store in an airtight container for up to 2 weeks (if they last that long!)

Pauline Mardell

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Body & Earth Spring Eco Somatics & Storytelling in the Brecon Beacons

27th April 10am-4pm
Cwmffrwd, Pengenffordd, LD3 0ES

Explore the relationship between our inner and outer worlds with this blissful blend of nature-inspired somatic movement and storytelling

Activities are outdoors so appropriate clothing and footwear is required. Shelter is provided under the fire pit parachute, but bringing a warm blanket and layers is a good idea. If you have your own yoga mat, please also bring this.



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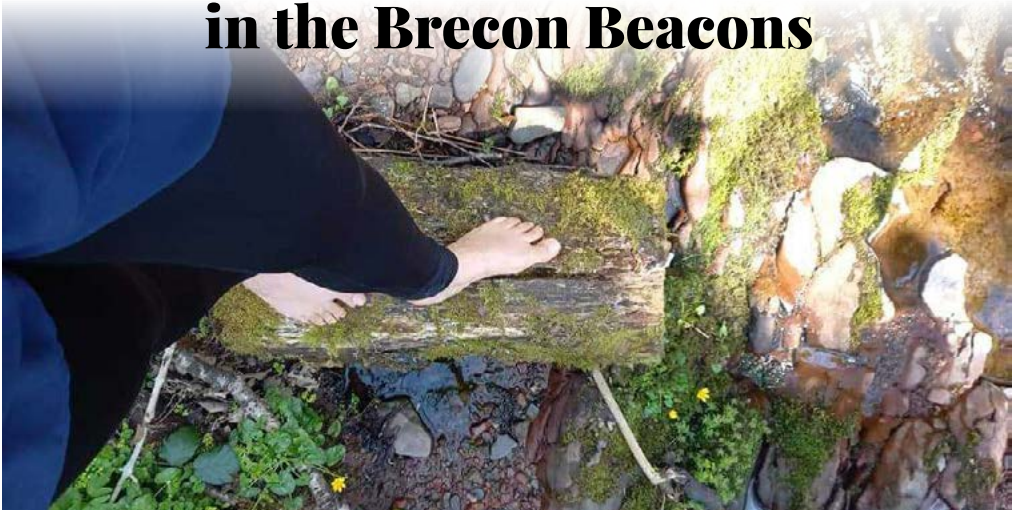


Contact me:

07890 966508

helen@helenwhitney.co.uk
www.helenwhitney.co.uk

Spring Eco Somatics & Storytelling in the Brecon Beacons



Boo Bond from Body & Earth talks to Pridie Tiernan about their forthcoming Eco Somatic and Storytelling Workshop in April, which they will co-host at Cwmffrwd – Pridie's farm – in the Black Mountains, where Pridie also runs foraging and rewilding workshops throughout the year.

Tell me about the farm...

Cwmffrwd is tucked up on the slopes of the Black Mountains. South facing, we gaze across the wide green Rhiangoll Valley, flanked to the east by the range's highest hill, Waun Fach, & Mynydd Troed to the west.

What was your vision?

Our vision was always to make nature accessible to all - to use the farm as a base for learning to care for and protect the land. That journey continues today, with us learning just as much from our neighbouring farms and the many incredible people who visit.

Why do you think nature is so important for wellbeing?

Nature activates the brain in a way that wakes it up fully. Body and soul; the same. Nature's narrative is our narrative and something deep inside us instantly recognises this when we step outdoors. With that comes incredible joy and also deep peace.

Where do you go when you need to recharge?

I walk up. Up to a fallen ash tree that sits spearing the sky at the mountain treeline. That ash never fails to provide me with the headspace and heartspace to reset. The workshop will be an opportunity to slow down, and really tune in and attend to our bodies, as more than just vehicles which carry us through the world... and to the world, as more than just a backdrop to our busy lives. We will be connecting to our felt sense of presence and being in the world, as we explore this through embodied practices which take our attention both inward and outward using all of our senses. The invitation is

to get your hands dirty, in the metaphorical and literal sense, as we explore unstructured spontaneous movement, touch, breathwork, art making with found and foraged materials, some shared lunch (provided by us) and some storytelling. I do believe that modern culture both actively and accidentally leads us to neglect, suspect, ignore and deny our bodies' needs and wisdom. It will be a chance to dig a little and hopefully restore confidence in your body and its natural intelligence.

If you are interested in taking part in the workshop, please bring an open heart and a pair of outdoor shoes/ weather appropriate clothing. You can book tickets by following the QR code on our advert on Page 50

*Boo Bond
Body & Earth Holistics*



Prevention is Better than Cure!

Strengthening your upper back and neck can help prevent rounded shoulders and poor posture

Most of us know that Pilates is proven to help with core strength, balance, and mobility but did you know that it can also help with your posture? As we age, habits we've picked up from long hours working at a desk, looking at screens and devices, or tending to young children and animals means that we spend much of our lives bent over with our shoulders rounded and our heads in a forward position. Over time this can develop into a 'widows stoop' with the head and chin leading the way and



lots of tension in the upper back, neck and shoulders.

The exercise below is one of my favourites to help strengthen the upper back and shoulders and with practice it can also help to relieve tension and pain in the upper back. Future proofing our bodies is one of my main goals, so that we can remain healthy and strong in our later years. I teach this exercise regularly in my local classes but you can also learn with me by joining my online community. It's an easy and affordable way to incorporate

Pilates into your daily life and your body will thank you for taking the time to look after it. Please get in touch if you'd like more information or subscribe to my online video library. I hope you take a few minutes try the exercise below and perhaps create a tiny habit to improve your posture!

Kate Thomas

Please consult with a healthcare professional before starting any new fitness programs, including Pilates. If you have any injuries, health conditions, or other physical limitations, it is important to seek medical advice beforehand. The information provided in this article is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified healthcare professionals with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.

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1
Lying on your front, arms at a 90 degree angle from your shoulder to elbow and elbow to wrist. Forehead and arms resting on the floor. Relax the whole body. Imagine an ice cube under your bellybutton and gently draw your tummy muscles up and away from the ice cube.



2
Take a breath in and as you exhale, lift your arms and head no more than 1 inch off the mat. Keep looking at the floor rather than lifting your chin. Just make sure you don't squeeze your bottom to help you. The arms and head should feel very heavy as you're using just your upper back and neck to hold this position.



3
Take another breath in to hold and then as you exhale, draw your elbows towards your ribcage making sure the arms stay no more than 1 inch off the mat. They should just skim the floor. You are holding the weight of the head and arms as before and making sure you switch off the rest of the body.



4
As you inhale, extend your arms over your head like Superman. Once again, keeping close to the floor. It's important that you don't lift the back up high or strain but keep it small. Less is always more in Pilates. If your shoulders are tight or painful, take your arms to a wider V shape like the next picture.



5
It doesn't matter how far your arms reach, just keep moving them and bit by bit your mobility will improve with practice and consistency. All the while that little ice cube stays under the belly button and you want to keep your tummy away from it. Your lower body remains relaxed throughout.



6
Now repeat the sequence 6 times. Drawing the elbows right back towards the ribs as you exhale (pulling the shoulder blades down and away from your ears) and then extending them long over your head as you inhale. It's as if you're dusting the floor while you move the arms back and forth.

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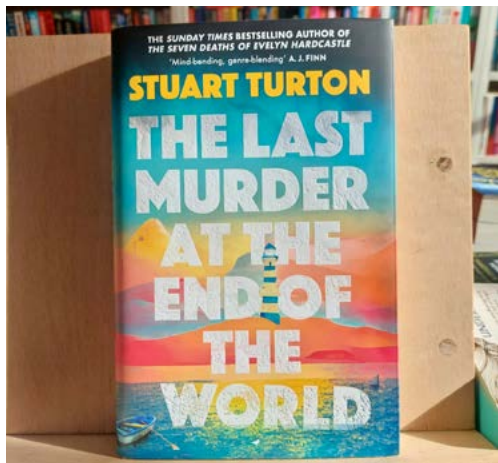
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Book Recommendations

*This month's top literary picks
from the talented booksellers
at Book-ish*



The Last Murder at the End of the World

Stuart Turton

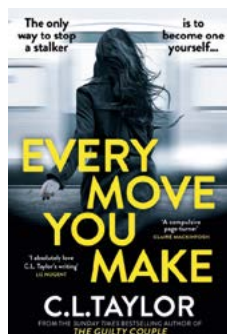
£20

Outside the island there is nothing: the world destroyed by a fog that swept the planet, killing anyone it touched. On the island: it is idyllic. 122 villagers and 3 scientists, living in peaceful harmony. The villagers are content to fish, farm and feast, to obey their nightly curfew, to do what they're told by the scientists.

Until, to the horror of the islanders, one of their beloved scientists is found brutally stabbed to death. And they learn the murder has triggered a lowering of the security system around the island, the only thing that was keeping the fog at bay.

If the murder isn't solved within 107 hours, the fog will smother the island - and everyone on it.

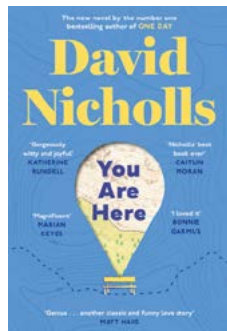
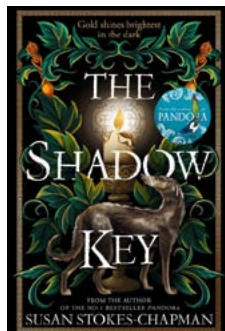
But the security system has also wiped everyone's memories of exactly what happened the night before, which means that someone on the island is a murderer - and they don't even know it.



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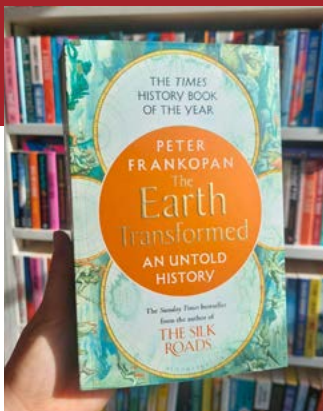


16TH APRIL: SUSAN STOKES-CHAPMAN
BOOK-ISH LOFT, CRICKHOWELL
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24TH APRIL: DAVID NICHOLLS
THE MANOR HOTEL, CRICKHOWELL
TICKET £10 | WITH BOOK £20

EVENTS START AT 7.30PM

BOOK ONLINE: WWW.BOOK-ISH.CO.UK/EVENTS



The Earth Transformed: An Untold History

Peter Frankopan

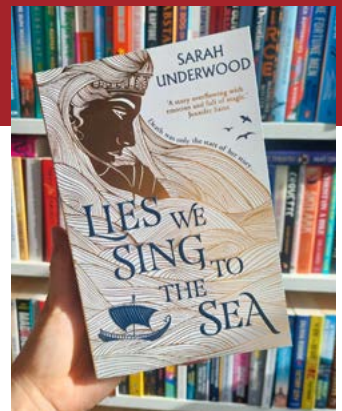
£30
Wide-ranging, topical and revelatory, this monumental account from the author of *The Silk Roads* of how the natural world has shaped human history sheds fascinating new light on both today's climate crisis and the epochal shifts of the past.



Blossomise

Simon Armitage

£10
Blossomise celebrates the ecstatic arrival of spring blossom just as it acknowledges, too, its melancholy disappearance. Full of spirited leaps of imagination and language, the twenty-one poems hopscotch between intense momentary haikus that honour the Japanese traditions of the blossom festival and stand-alone lyrical pieces that take in the stylistic tones of ballads, hymns, songs, prayers and nursery rhymes.



Lies We Sing to the Sea

Sarah Underwood

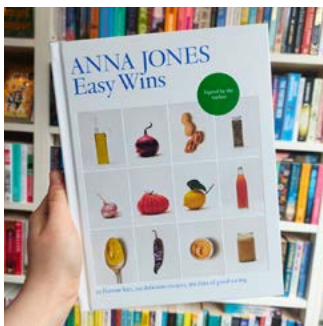
£8.99
In the cursed kingdom of Ithaca, each spring brings the hanging of twelve maidens, a gift to the vengeful Poseidon. But when Leto awakens from her death on the shore of a long-forgotten island, its enigmatic keeper Melantho tells her that there's only one way the curse can be broken. Leto must kill the last prince of Ithaca . . .
A sapphic YA fantasy romance inspired by Greek mythology, for all fans of *The Song of Achilles*



The Half Bird

Susan Smillie

£16.99
When Susan quit her job in London and set sail off the south coast of England on her beloved sailboat, Isean, she was unaware this spontaneous departure would lead to a three-year journey spanning several countries across the continent. With only the very basics on board, resourcefulness becomes an unexpected source of joy and contentment. The highs and lows of living in such an extreme way awakens a newfound appreciation for the beauty of her surroundings, for being safe - for just being alive.



Easy Wins

Anna Jones

£28
Anna takes 12 hero ingredients that are guaranteed to make your food taste great, with chapters on lemons, olive oil, mustard, tahini and more. She gives 125 all-new dishes that you will want to cook on repeat, like Double Lemon Pilaf with Buttery Almonds, Traybake Lemon Dhal, Miso Rarebit, and Cherry and Chocolate Peanut Butter Sundae. And there's practical advice on how to season and flavour, plus plenty of ideas for invaluable vegetarian swaps.



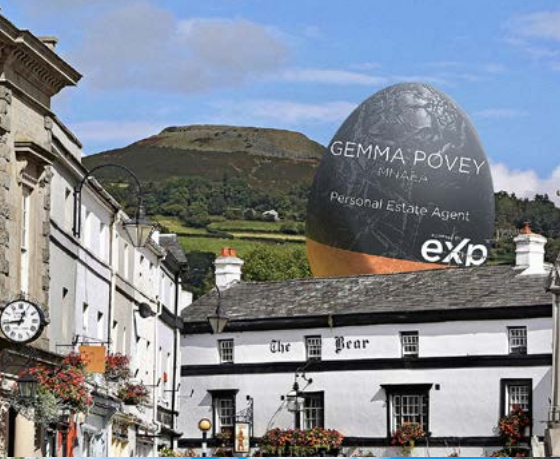
THE Giant Egg HUNT

You may recall that last month we hid a bunch of giant virtual Easter eggs throughout Monmouthshire and South Powys as part of our competition to win an Easter Hamper. At time of going to press for April's magazine, we hadn't yet drawn our winner as the competition remained open. We will, of course, update you next month as



to who our winner is! For those of you who did take part, here are the eggs and their locations revealed!

Our eggs caused quite a stir online, with plenty of people wondering if they were real and, indeed, if we'd had permissions from Bannau Brycheiniog National Parks Authority to install eggs where we had! We had lots of feedback from readers to say how much they enjoyed taking part and seeing the locations of the virtual eggs. Such is the beauty of our surrounding area, we couldn't resist the opportunity to share these with you once more and give another shout out to the businesses who took part and sponsored Giant Eggs in their name.





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Depression & Art in Dowlais

THE STORY OF THE DOWLAIS EDUCATIONAL SETTLEMENT



Merthyr Tydfil was at the centre of the Industrial Revolution, but by the 1920s its industrial supremacy had faltered. The area, like much of South Wales, was suffering from widespread unemployment and deprivation. Into this came a Quaker called

John Dennithorne, who founded clubs to change the fortunes of unemployed workers. Helen Morgan from Abergavenny Local History Society reports.

In time Cedric Morris, Esther Grainger, Arthur Giardelli and many other artists would come to Dowlais and show unemployed workers how to create art.

Dennithorne trained as an artist at the Central School of Art and Crafts (a forerunner of Central St. Martin's School of Art), in London. He had been working with the finest British sculptors of the age when he heeded the call in 1928 from The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) to help the unemployed. He cared about beauty, including the artistic kind, but Dennithorne had come to think that helping to make life more beautiful for people was a greater necessity. So he moved to Dowlais where he established and became warden of an Unemployed Men's Club in Horse Street. It was so

successful that it had to move into larger premises at Trewern House before extending into adjoining Gwernllwyn house. He remained in Merthyr Tydfil until his death in 1984.

Friends in Britain, as these Quakers were known, had to prove the value of their contribution to local people. They were conspicuously outsiders from England and relatively privileged. Trades unions wanted volunteers to be paid union rates. Elected representatives sought democratic control while other commentators viewed the schemes as ways of avoiding the recruitment of the unemployed into militancy and communism. By 1932, however, Dowlais Educational Settlement was benefiting from grants and was growing into a hub from for classes and courses for Settlement

members. Activities included art appreciation, music, drama and house building as well as mending garments and making re-usable the vast amount of donated second-hand clothing. Dennithorne, meanwhile, was trying to keep the reality of unemployment and the Dowlais situation in the public eye, giving talks, radio broadcasts and interviews for the BBC. "His is the story of adult education in Wales and how art and artists used the medium to change the lives of people in extreme poverty," says Christopher Parry.

Christopher Parry's talk at the Borough Theatre on April 24th starts at 7.30pm. To reserve your seat, contact the Borough Theatre online or via the box office (free to ALHS members). For details visit abergavennylocalhistorysociety.org.uk.

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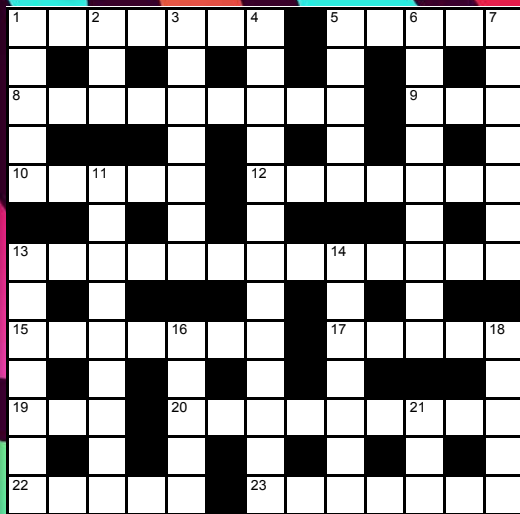
Quick Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Denied (7)
- 5 Not ours (5)
- 8 Amazing (9)
- 9 Spot (3)
- 10 Nap (5)
- 12 Replies (7)
- 13 Nearly (13)
- 15 Mum's mother (7)
- 17 Healed (5)
- 19 Lodging house (3)
- 20 Ethereal (9)
- 22 Dizzy (5)
- 23 Convent (7)

DOWN

- 1 Disagreements (5)
- 2 Supporter (3)
- 3 Used for cleaning (7)
- 4 Insistence (13)
- 5 Sailboat (5)
- 6 Vests, boxers (9)
- 7 Fulfil (7)
- 11 Made clear (9)
- 13 Fishing (7)
- 14 Sale by bidding (7)
- 16 Covered with fine powder (5)
- 18 Hold up (5)
- 21 Employ (3)



Next Month's FOCUS...

LET'S GO CLUBBING!



We have so many sporting clubs and local interest groups in our area that we thought it was about time to celebrate them! Promote your group or club in May's editions of the Focus by dropping us an email to find out how to be included. With the arrival of Spring, lots of events also take place, and the Focus is the perfect platform to let everyone know about it.

DEADLINE DATE FOR MAY'S PUBLICATION IS: 24TH APRIL

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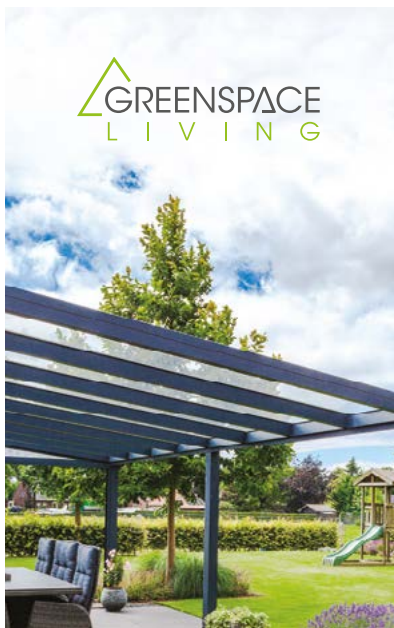
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