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Dear Readers,



We're excited to bring you this month's magazine with the hope that Spring is finally springing and with all fingers crossed that the rain will stay away, at least for a little while. This month our feature is all about local clubs and groups, and we've been excited by the number of them that we've been able to fit into the magazine. I'm sure you'll agree there's a really diverse range of hobby groups and clubs in our area, and we're lucky that most interests can be catered for. Being part of a club or group is so good for socialising and mental wellbeing and we hope that some of our articles may spark your interest and prompt you to get involved!

At Easter we ran a competition to find giant virtual Easter Eggs that we had scattered across Monmouthshire and Powys. We're delighted to let you know that our winner was drawn at Easter and was Sue Lenthall from Abergavenny. Due to Covid and the need to distance, we weren't able to get a snap of Sue with her hamper, but here's what she won! Congratulations to her and thank you to everyone who took part in the fun.



Lots to read about this month.
We hope you enjoy!

Hannah

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Beaupréau Twinning Trip



Abergavenny, Monmouthshire named the best place to live in Wales in 2024 recently represented itself in its twin town of Beaupréau-en-Mauges, Maine-et-Loire in Western France. The delegation from Abergavenny consisted of members from Abergavenny's Twinning Association, Rhinos Football Club and Town Council. They represented the people of Abergavenny and brought a bit of home to Beaupréau-en-Mauges where the Europiad was taking place between four countries (Wales, France, Germany and Spain).

The trip ended the separation between the two towns when Beaupréau last visited Abergavenny in 2018 before the Covid-19 Pandemic. Although Twinning may seem like a bygone thing, the current trip signified that Twinning is still standing the test of time and is still going strong as a result, building links and exchanges between individual towns and cities, bringing reconciliation and prosperity after years of conflict between nations.

During the duration of the trip to Beaupréau by Abergavenny in attendance of Vidreres (Spain) and Munsingen (Germany), a few personages offer an insight as to what happened amongst the many sporting events and linguistic exchanges that occurred from their own perspective:

John Prosser (Chairperson of the Abergavenny Twinning Association): "Thirty three years of twinning with Beaupréau and the friendship is still going strong as demonstrated by the warm reception received by the Welsh delegation!. It was good to see teams from Wales, France, Germany, and Spain taking part and the exciting exchange of ideas for future events. We look forward to the next visit from Beaupréau.."

Simon Mansfield (Secretary of the Abergavenny Rhinos Football Club): "As a club we were honoured to be invited by Beaupréau to take part in their recent Olympiads event alongside clubs from Germany, Spain, France & Rhinos (Wales) to celebrate the Olympics being held in Paris this year. The youngsters who represented

Abergavenny & Aber rhinos were absolutely 1st class throughout the trip & Events & we are so proud that our U,14s despite tough opposition won the Event. The trip was a great success & was a great experience for all involved. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the parents & players who attended & mayor Anne Wilde & town councillors & members of the twinning committee for their support during the weekend.."

Kyle Jamie Eldridge (An Abergavenny Town Councillor who went on his own accord):

It was an honor to go to Beaupréau and go alongside a fantastic group of young people, who not only represented their town with enthusiasm and skill, but who made twinning stronger than ever by just being themselves.

Pauline Dilay (One of the Beaupréau Twinning Organizers):

"Basically the experience was very exciting, we wanted to organise something for the youngsters of Beaupréau, something they will never forget, around sports events and linguistic exchanges.

It worked very well thanks to the enthusiasm of the clubs here in Beaupréau and the wonderful host families who were ready to follow us in this adventure.."

To find out more about Twinning for the purposes of developing human and cultural relations and establishing a firm foundation for future understanding, respect and friendship for all time where you live, please visit the Abergavenny Twinning Association Facebook Page or get in touch with your local town council if you live further afield.

Abergavenny Twinning Association



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May Weather Outlook

by Jonathan Powell

Following on from an April that was dominated during the opening half of the month by rain and gusty winds, May looks like presenting itself with a similar mixed but then improving guise. As we edge into the last third of spring, an unsettled start to May followed by a gradual calming of conditions as high pressure systems seek to establish themselves and anchor down across Wales. With the prospect of blue skies and bright sunshine, we could well see temperatures climb rather nicely and indeed by late month, there is the prospect of some possibly very warm weather. With June around the corner and the continuation of further warm temperatures a conceivable outlook, the set-up for summer does show early promise. Rainfall for May is expected to be around the average with temperatures above the average.

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A Blooming Marvellous Day Out

Cantref Open Gardens Returns for its 11th Year



Picture the scene: a warm June day, the sun filtering through the trees, casting dappled light on colourful flowers, tables groaning with home-made cakes and savoury snacks, the air filled with the buzz of bees and the melodies of a saxophone quartet. All this (weather-permitting!) is what awaits visitors to Cantref Open Gardens on Sunday, 9 June 2024, from 11.30am to 5.30pm.

unique charm and character, from compact, Tardis-like terraced house gardens to a 2-acre Victorian walled garden. Visitors will see orchards, meadows, wildlife ponds, a kitchen garden specialising in sweet peas, trees, shrubs, a 'prairie garden', a garden of games and a fernery in a restored Victorian greenhouse .

All proceeds from the event, including ticket sales will be donated to Target Ovarian Cancer,

the UK's leading ovarian cancer charity. Last year alone, the event raised £4,230, bringing the total raised over the past decade to £36,796. Several of the event's members have lost loved ones to ovarian cancer, and the event is about raising awareness and early diagnosis as well as funding research into better treatments.

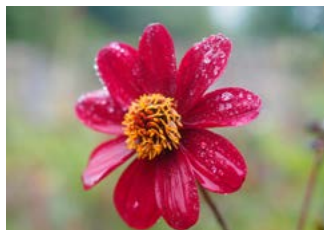
Entry is £6 for adults (children go free) and includes a map of the gardens. The main ticket sales point is at Christ Church in North Street NP7 7EB, but tickets can be purchased at any of the outlying gardens. There will be refreshments at the church hall, and visitors who make it up to Orchard House on Pentre Lane (opposite the Sugarloaf Vineyard) can enjoy wood-fired pizzas by Rachael Watson, who runs the Abergavenny Baker cooking school.

As well as plant sales and a second-hand book stall, Cherry Taylor, an expert in ecology and no-dig gardening, will be on hand to share her knowledge, while Dylan Allman from Hedgehog Aware will explain how gardeners can support their local hedgehog populations.

Jack Thurston



Once a year, the neighbourhood of Cantref, in western Abergavenny, comes together to share their horticultural passions with the public. This year, 16 gardens will open their gates, including three new additions. Each has its own



Bank Holiday Fun for the Family

Abergavenny Steam Rally 2024

26th–27th May, Bailey Park



What annual event in our town is such a marvellous two days of fun and wonderment for the whole family, yet also manages to be one of the biggest charitable fund raisers in Wales and the Marches? Look no further than Abergavenny Steam Rally.

Thanks to Abergavenny Rotary Club, which spearheads the efforts of the many volunteers making the show possible, our Steam Rally has gone from strength to strength. As one visitor from the Midlands said last year: "Where else could you see such an array of vehicles, exhibits and things you had thought had gone forever, all brought together in the centre of town in a small but packed space?"

The show is in Bailey Park, Abergavenny, over the May Bank Holiday, Sunday and Monday, 26th and 27th May. Besides a superb gathering of Steam Engines and Organs, there is also a display of Vintage, Veteran and Classic Cars, Caravans, Motorcycles, Tractors, Military and Commercial Vehicles and Static Engines. A Model Tent, and a range of displays of handicrafts and country pursuits will show off the expertise of local people dedicated to keeping craft alive.

Each day there is a full programme of arena events to delight the whole family including vehicle parades, bands and the ever-popular Tug of War between hundreds of children and a mighty traction engine.

Local worthy causes are set to benefit from the thousands of pounds raised at this year's bumper Steam Rally in Bailey Park. But another spin-off for Parkinsons Cymru is a special donation thanks to late entry exhibitors, the Rotary President's chosen charity for his Presidential year.

"This is a real community venture and all thanks to the hard work of a dedicated bunch of locals organisations which help us marshal the event and make it such a great success," said Rally Organiser David Hassall. "It is a tribute to those people who willingly give up their time for nothing to help make this event what it has grown into, and also why we are able to help so many good causes in the town. Our dedication is that so much given to the Steam Rally is used for the benefit of the town".

Last year, with the Sunday first day enjoying sunny skies, the rally

cleared well over £20,000, most of which went to local worthy causes.

Abergavenny Rotary Club President Dean Christy added: "It's a great show, it is very much home-grown but attracts a vast audience of people who travel from near and far to experience the sights and sounds of a very different day out. The Rally came back with a bang after Covid with record crowds generating a huge buzz in Bailey Park and the town. We are hoping for some fine weather again and planning for an even bigger and better event this year", said Dean.

Visitors and exhibitors are attracted from the length and breadth of Great Britain and this unique event is firmly established as one of the prime entertainment events in South Wales.

"This is a great boost," said David. "The Steam Rally is Rotary's major fundraiser and with the help of a lot of people we have kept alive a great show for the town. Because everyone works for free the local causes see a great benefit. As Rotarians we are committed to supporting the youth of the town and we do like to see a sizeable proportion of the money go to the various youth organisations. As a result of our interest in them, the youngsters reciprocate by volunteering to help us on the two days of the show. It's a great community spirit and even the

paying customers are more pleased to pay the entrance fee when they know that the money raised will stay in the town to help good causes."

"There is vast array of things to look at, play on and eat and we have produced a show which is an absolute delight for the whole family. Without any contradiction we can say there is something for everybody and fascinating entertainment throughout both days."

DEFYING GRAVITY

This year sees the launch of a new arena show for the 2024 season, 'Defying Gravity'.

This new arena performance is the only show of its kind in the world, it's fresh, new and has never been seen before.

The performance combines freestyle BMX and the extreme sport of mountainboarding which results in a breathtaking, jaw dropping aerial performance which will delight and impress audiences of all ages.

TIGERS CHILDREN'S MOTORCYCLE DISPLAY TEAM

We are quite used to flabbergasted faces after a show when helmets come off and the age of our riders really hits home. How on earth do we have a 6 year old jumping through fire, or an 11 year old soaring over a car?

The only pre-requisite to join us is that a child can ride a push bike without stabilisers. Some may have more riding experience, but our juniors in particular often come in as total blank canvases. But they are quick learners! Our rookies work hard trying out tricks and jumping, week by week, building the foundations of confidence and trust.

Get ready to cheer these kids on as they put on a memorable show for you all to enjoy!

Discounted advanced ticket sales were introduced for the first-time last year and proved to be very popular with the public. As well as saving money on the gate price they also give priority entry to the park and save on queuing times. A lot of people last year still paid on the day, but organisers are hoping for an even greater take up of the advanced ticket option this year. Early Bird tickets with a 15% discount are available until Sunday 19 May 2024. After that, they can be bought at the full price of £10 per adult either in advance online - saving queuing on the day, or by cash or card on the day. Children under the age of 16 can enter free.

If you wish to buy an early bird ticket in advance by Sunday 19 May 2024 and save yourself 15% on the price of £10, then just scan the QR code or go to the Steam Rally Website at: abergavennysteamrally.co.uk

Abergavenny Rotary Club

JUST SOME OF THE GROUPS HELPED LAST YEAR BY THE STEAM RALLY

Kitchen Refurbishment for Llanwenarth Village Hall
Replacement windows for Christchurch Community Hall, North Street
Children's Christmas Party and Trip for the Community Enterprise Partnership
Film making course for young people at the Melville Centre for Arts
New flooring for St Johns Ambulance Centre
Training Kits for Abergavenny Girls FC and Abergavenny Town FC Youth
Leadership Course for the Dance Blast Group
Three trips for Afghan and Syrian Children for

the Abergavenny Town of Sanctuary
Support for groups which help at the Steam Rally including AAODS, the Swimming Club, the Tennis Club, St Johns Ambulance, Scouts, and Netball Club.

A set of refurbished instruments for use by young people on the Black Mountain Jazz Katz course
Christmas Food Hampers for Cwtch Angels
Upgraded Cafe/Bar facilities for Abergavenny Bowls Club
Shelves and Radio equipment for the Gathering Community Group
Prize money for the Abergavenny Eisteddfod.
Facilities for outdoor learning at Abergavenny Community Centre



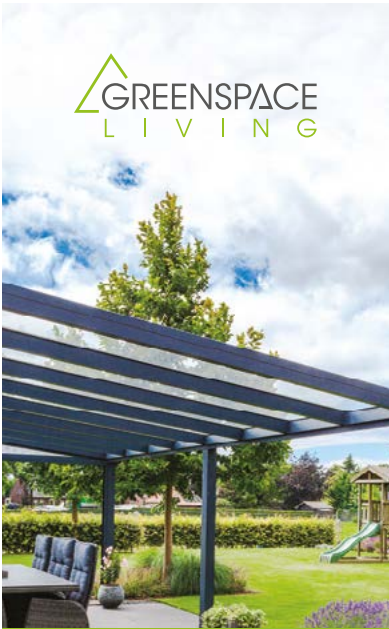
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MAY EVENTS CALENDAR

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*

6TH MAY

SPRING BLOSSOM CELEBRATION

Do come to our lovely Spring celebration day. There will be craft activities for children and cake and refreshments. Bring a picnic and enjoy the blossom and the growing summer meadow. *12pm-3pm, Laurie Jones Community Orchard, Mill Street, Abergavenny*

7TH MAY

AMBASSADOR OF NOWHERE – RICHARD GWYN

7.30pm, Book-ish Loft, 18 High St, Crickhowell Tickets £8 or £18 with book. Visit www.book-ish.co.uk/ events for tickets

9TH MAY

THE PUZZLE WOOD – ROSIE ANDREWS

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

10TH MAY

Llanfoist Village Hall Film Night ONE LIFE (CERT. 12A)

Sir Nicholas 'Nicky' Winton, a young London broker who, in the months leading up to World War II, rescued over 600 children from Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia.

Doors open 7pm, Film starts 7.30pm, Bar available. Tickets £5 adults, £3 children. Llanfoist Village Hall, Church Lane, Llanfoist

11TH MAY

CASTLE MEADOWS BIRD WALK WITH STEVE BUTLER

What's that bird? Which bird is making that noise? Find out! Don't forget your binoculars! *8:30am-12pm, Meet in Lower Byefield Lane Car Park*

11TH MAY

Hardy Plant Society illustrated talk HYDRANGEAS – A GENTLE OBSESSION BY ROGER LLOYD

2:30pm, Little Mill Village Hall
See article on Page 34 for more info

12TH MAY

WALK THE CANAL WITH ROTARY FOR CANCER RESEARCH WALES

Sponsored Walk along the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal raise funds for Cancer Research Wales and other local worthy causes. Five start points of varying lengths at Llangattock, Gilwern, Llanfoist, Pontymoile Basins and Five Locks Cwmbran, all finishing at Goytre Wharf for a BBQ. *For more info visit www.walkthecanal.com or email rvparker4@hotmail.com*
Organised by Abergavenny, Crickhowell, Cwmbran Vale, Henllys and Pontypool Rotary Clubs

15TH MAY

FREE WEEKLY EXERCISE PROGRAMME FOR THE OVER 50S

Join us for gentle movement exercises, basic health advice, and the opportunity to learn new life skills. Meet wonderful people who are of a similar age and share similar interests. Plus, we have some suggestions to help improve your overall health and well-being. No booking is required, but it is recommended. This programme is open to anyone aged 50+ and of all abilities. And guess what? Free tea and coffee will be available afterward, so you can relax and

socialise with your newfound friends. For further details or to book your place, feel free to contact us at 03033 030 132 or email us at info@actionforelders.org.uk. *9.30am-10.30am, Gateway Church, Monk St, Abergavenny*

18TH MAY

STORYTELLING LIVE!

7pm – 8.30pm, Melville Centre, Penypound, Abergavenny
See article on Page 36 for more info

18TH MAY

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. *11am-2pm, Abergavenny Community Centre, Merthyr Rd, Abergavenny. Contact repaircafeabergavenny@gmail.com and Facebook messenger*

18TH MAY

SPRING DUCK RACE

we will once again see 1000 yellow ducks head down the river at Swan Meadows in Abergavenny to help the dogs at Hope Rescue. The ducks will launch from the road bridge over the river, then travel downstream, navigating boulders, steep drops and pond weeds before being collected by our team of Hope Rescue volunteers (don't forget your wellies guys!). Each duck costs £1 and the first across the finish line is the winner of £100. All duck numbers will be emailed out prior to the race and EVERY single duck will be caught in our nets to prevent them travelling any further. *12pm, Swan Meadow, Abergavenny*

CONTINUED OVERLEAF...

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18TH MAY – 15TH JUNE**THE BIG DOODLE**

Drop in and doodle at So Artrageous, Lulworth House, Monk St, Abergavenny. Tuesdays to Saturdays 11am-4pm. See our article on Page 33 for more info

19TH MAY**GOYTRE WHARF SPRING CRAFT FAYRE**

80 craft stalls. Live music. Food and drink available 10am, Goytre Wharf, Llanover, Abergavenny

22ND MAY**MY FAMILY AND OTHER ROCK STARS: TIFFANY MURRAY**

7.30pm, Book-ish Loft, 18 High St, Crickhowell. Tickets £12 or £22 with book. Visit book-ish.co.uk/events for tickets

22ND MAY**ABERGAVENTNY LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY TALK**

Madeleine Gray on Gwladys Ddu and William ap Thomas. 7.30pm, Borough Theatre, Abergavenny
See Page 45 for more info

24TH MAY**ABERGAVENTNY U3A 'OPEN HOUSE'**

1pm, Penypound Football Clubhouse. See Page 21.

24TH-27TH MAY**FLOWER FESTIVAL**

10am – 5pm, St Michaels Church, Llanvihangel Crucorney
See our article on Page 35 for more info

26TH AND 27TH MAY**ABERGAVENTNY STEAM RALLY**

See article on page 10 & 11. Visit abergavennysteamrally.co.uk for details. 10am-6pm, Bailey Park, Abergavenny

26TH MAY**CASTLE MEADOWS WILDLIFE WALK**

Led by Kath Beasley, Community Ecologist, Gwent Wildlife. Meet 10am Byefield Lane Car Park

1ST JUNE**USK RIVER FESTIVAL**

The very first Usk River Festival! It will be a celebration of the Usk and the communities that live and work alongside this beautiful and endangered river.

10am-3pm. For more info visit savetheriverusk.org or email together@savetheriverusk.org

5TH JUNE**ABERGAVENTNY OVER 50S GROUP**

'Broads on Broadway' Join us for an informative and entertaining talk from Chris Purkiss about women's roles, accompanied by music.

2pm, Trinity Church Hall, Baker St, Abergavenny

8TH JUNE**FAMILY POND DIPPING IN CASTLE MEADOWS**

A pond dipping event for all the family at The Pond in Castle Meadows, Castle Street, Abergavenny.

Come and enjoy a family pond dipping experience, learn to identify and record important pond life, and have a go at watercolour painting. *WhatThreeWords loom.munched.dreamers.* 2pm, Castle Meadows

9TH JUNE**CANTREF OPEN GARDENS**

– Celebrating its 11th year

11.30am-5.30pm. See article on Page 9 for more info

15TH JUNE**ABERGAVENTNY ARTS FESTIVAL****6TH JULY****SOUTH WALES SHIRE HORSE SHOW**

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

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

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Abergavenny Hockey Club



We are coming to the end of another successful season at Abergavenny Hockey Club. Fielding two senior teams (Men and Ladies) and junior squads (boys and girls) right through from the Under 8 age range, we have seen great performances this season.

The Ladies finished 5th, and the Men finished 3rd in their respective leagues. A huge number of Junior tournaments and fixtures were fulfilled throughout the season, and this culminated in the Under 12 Boys recently winning the South Wales Plate in their final cup tournament.

Established in 1897, we are one of the oldest Hockey Clubs in Wales and can celebrate great history throughout that time. Club players have represented their country right through from age 18 to Welsh Masters hockey (aged 70+).

The main thing though, is enjoying your team sport; we pride ourselves on offering a welcoming atmosphere to all. Everyone is welcome at the club irrespective of your age or experience – come along and give it a go!

We are still thriving, despite the knock-on effect of the work being

undertaken at King Henry VIII school. This is meaning our home hockey pitch venue is unavailable until the work is complete. In the meantime, we train on Tuesdays at Crickhowell High School, and our senior matches take place in Monmouth or Chepstow Leisure Centres.

This has not affected our enthusiasm for our sport! We are lucky to have a good number of volunteer coaches and parents helping develop our junior section and this provides us with an exciting future. But we always need new players! Please come along and give it a go. We will continue having a few social senior "training" sessions on Tuesdays, the intention of which is to have a bit of fun with all your team-mates from all sections!

Look us up on our website www.abergavennyhockey.co.uk




Abergavenny Hockey Club



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However, this is only possible when our carers feel valued and supported themselves. We listen to our staff, and always try to implement any suggestions which will make their lives better and easier and improve the level of service which we offer. We are therefore always looking for people to join us; people who are as passionate as we are in helping people to live their lives to their full potential.

JOINING OUR TEAM

We are currently looking for people to join our team. Experience is not necessary; if you have varied life experience and a real desire to make a difference, then we would like to hear from you. Enthusiasm for a change of career and a positive attitude are essential.



We offer full training leading to a recognised qualification in care. We also offer a comprehensive induction programme to increase knowledge and build confidence. This includes time spent shadowing other, more experienced carers before you go "out in the field" on your own. Our mandatory training is delivered via e-learning courses which means that our staff can study at their leisure.

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Llanddewi Skirrid Stitch Group

We are very friendly stitchers. We meet every Monday Evening at Llanddewi Skirrid Village Hall 7pm to 9pm. We spend a very pleasant 2 hrs doing crafts we enjoy or try a new interest while chatting with a cup of tea/coffee and a biscuit or two.



We all do our own projects that include Patchwork, cross stitch, embroidery, knitting, crochet to name but a few we also help each other out if needed.

We have sewing machines available for the groups use including an embroidery machine that is great fun.

We have taken part in a number of projects for charity including blankets – knitted and quilted for babies and Ty Hafren, hats for babies and sailors as well as items for local charites.

We have just celebrated our 25th anniversary and it was lovely to see stitch group friends catching up on completed and still on the go items.

Angela Bishop

Abergavenny u3a

No longer working full time! Why not come and join us at Abergavenny u3a?

You will make new friends in a welcoming social atmosphere where you can enjoy activities such as monthly Coffee Mornings and other social events. You can keep mentally and physically active with our wide variety of Interest Groups where you will learn new skills and explore new subjects. We also hold a Monthly General Meeting, usually with a guest speaker.

We meet in the daytime on Tuesdays and Fridays at Pen Y Pound Club House, with easy

access and ample parking. There are also additional Wednesday groups at other venues.

We are part of a national movement headed by the Third Age Trust, which provides support to Abergavenny u3a and provides Online-learning groups.

The Annual Subscription runs from March and is £35 for the year. This entitles you to attend as many groups as you wish at no extra cost. Just dip into whatever takes your fancy as often as you like.

From May 12th For two weeks you can see a display in the Red Square windows opposite

Waterstones of what we get up to. On the weekend of May 17/18 th Volunteers will man a table in the High Street to answer any questions you might have about the group.

On Friday May 24th 1-00pm there will be an 'Open House' at our club house at the Pen y Pound football club. All welcome to come along meet current members, the leaders of all our varied activities and see if the organisation is right for you. www.u3asites.org.uk/abergavenny/welcome

Marilyn Campbell

BMJazz Katz



An exciting and welcoming space for young musicians to share their music

BMJazz Katz is a workshop project run by Black Mountain Jazz, which gives youngsters up to the age of 19 years the opportunity to learn to play

together. It is open to those who play any instrument, including voice, to a 'reasonable level' for their age.

The tutors are all professional musicians, who bring their knowledge and enthusiasm and help students feel comfortable and capable. Their aim is to

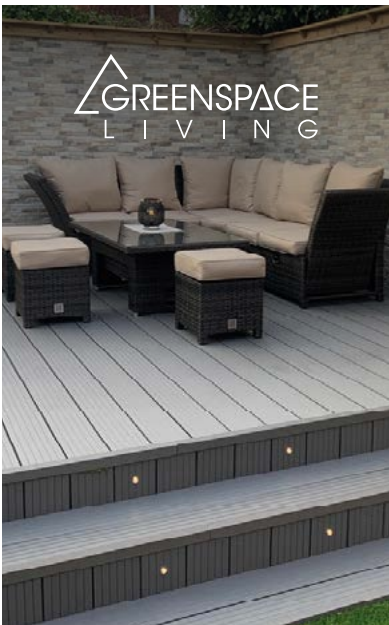
teach Jazz performance and improvisation from a more organic, aural tradition, with plenty of listening and no sheet music involved.

It is a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere with the sole purpose of showing participants the enjoyment and fulfilment that can be had from jazz music. Hopefully, the knowledge and confidence gained from the workshops will be useful in their future musical journeys.

There are two workshops each month – one on a Tuesday evening and one on a Sunday afternoon – both at Abergavenny's Melville Centre.

New members are always welcome – for more information please email us at info@blackmountainjazz.co.uk or call Mike on 07958 612691.

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The Shared Experience



Article after article in the Press at the moment praises the huge and undeniable benefits of Pilates, but joining a Pilates class gives you way more than you might think. Not only does it provide an opportunity to slow down, calm the mind and be present in the here and now but joining a group class can be a wonderfully uplifting experience.

Exercising with others can be motivating and fun, making the session fly by! It's a great way to meet new people and make friends with similar interests. This social connection can help reduce feelings

of isolation and increase a sense of happiness and belonging. Scientific studies now show that being part of a community, whether that be a choir, running group or Pilates class can help us feel connected and increase our lifespan.

Classes are usually led by certified instructors who can offer expert guidance on form and technique. The instructor can correct individuals' postures to ensure they are doing the exercises correctly and also provide modifications to suit each person's ability. This reduces the risk of injury and can help them to progress and improve over time.

The group class also offers a sense of accountability. When you sign up for a class, you are committing to showing up and doing the work. If you attend classes regularly, the rewards are palpable and you can stay on track with your fitness goals. You WILL get stronger with consistent practice and this does

wonders for your self-confidence. Within a class, you also stay accountable to one another and progress as a group, providing that shared experience and a greater sense of achievement.

Local classes are an affordable way to keep your body moving and if you would like to join me in a class, please get in touch. I will be adding 2 new classes at the St Michael's Centre, Abergavenny on Monday mornings (starting on May 13th). I also teach 8 other group classes locally during the week. For those who want to learn Pilates but can't get to a class for various reasons, I have an online library of videos to help you.

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A Sense of Community



I was recently having lunch with a friend who moved to Abergavenny

just over a year ago, she said she could not believe how friendly and welcoming everyone had been. This was from a lady who had given up her career of some 30 years to move to Wales with her husband, knew no-one, was struggling to find her identity having been defined by her job for so many years and someone who had moved from an area where she and her family had lived for 25 years. A very independent, capable lady who shared with me her experiences of packing up her life and taking a leap of faith.

One of the very interesting, humbling and enlightening aspects of being an estate agent is dealing with people from so many different backgrounds, all

with their own reasons for moving. Many of our buyers and sellers share their wishes, future plans and highs and lows with the team. We are not just selling a house, we are there as an emotional as well as a practical support. Recently we received a thoughtful 'thank you' card from a buyer who wrote 'thank you for your kindness and support with our purchase. It's not just a house to us, it really means the world'. A sentence that meant

so much after a few months of navigating challenges that are often part of the conveyancing and home moving process.

I mentioned in a recent article that we had made the decision to renew the lease on our superb showroom and offices in Nevill Street, Abergavenny for another 10 years. 'The end of the High Street estate agent' has been quoted in the press for many years now, whilst technology



has and will continue to feature more and more in the processes involved in a house buying and selling transaction, IT will never replace the emotions inevitably at the fore when selling or buying your next family home, the dream home you have worked hard for or the practical decision of downsizing and leaving a home filled with memories. We took stock after lockdown and recorded the number of visitors to the office and have been somewhat surprised over the past year or so that the numbers have increased and not decreased.

So often nowadays, when dealing with large organisations, we are pointed towards an 'on line chat' with a digital customer service assistant where we can click a drop down box or let the company know 'in one sentence' what we need help with. And whilst the impersonal and often frustrating 'digital assistant' has its place in efficiency and process, there is no substitute for

sitting down, with a cup of tea or coffee having a conversation with a 'real person' who can offer advice, a listening ear and when appropriate, some humour too!

The whole team loves working in Nevill Street, not only for its history and aesthetic appeal with the brightly coloured buildings and pedestrianised walkways, but the strong community amongst our fellow traders. Nevill Street is the home to some fantastic independent businesses who work together and support each other. The introduction of our Christmas Reindeers a couple of years ago really galvanised the trading community, since then we have held a Christmas Market and supported other events. Ginevra Croft at The Wool Shop is working with the Arts Festival and has asked the Nevill Street Traders if they would host some artists, Penny from Pink Angels is working with the Nevill Street Traders to provide some auction lots to support the Gunter Mansion,

Chris Jones, who instigated the initial Traders' meeting a few years ago, is looking at working with the business community to paint the map cases and bins, Sophie Bensley of Cooks Galley championed the challenges facing businesses in both practical and cost terms to comply with the new law around business waste and the whole street are proud to be involved with Abergavenny in Bloom and the Litter Free Zone project. Traders in other parts of the town have been equally involved and at Christmas, the independent businesses all worked together to promote the reindeer trail through the whole of the town.

At Parrys and Fine & Country, we are proud to be part of the Abergavenny community and hope that we do our bit to keep the town 'friendly and welcoming' so when people decide to come and live in this beautiful area, they don't feel alone.

Heather Cook



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30 Years of Bowling in Gilwern A Blossoming Tradition

As spring breathes new life into Gilwern, the signs of the season are everywhere – snowdrops, crocuses, and daffodils paint the landscape with vibrant hues. Even the grass at Gilwern Bowling Club is responding to the warming touch of sunshine, just in time for the club's 30th lawn bowling season.

Winter has been a time of nurturing for the green, with meticulous care including dressing, feeding, and hollow tining. The result is a lush carpet ready to welcome bowlers old and new. Indoor bowling has kept spirits high during the quieter months, complemented by a variety of community events at the club house adjacent to Gilwern Community Centre – from quizzes and bingo to festive gatherings and themed nights like Burns Night.

At the heart of Gilwern Bowling Club are its members, the driving force behind its success since its establishment in 1994. Despite

humble beginnings and the inevitable challenges over the years, the club is flourishing as it enters its fourth decade. Recent enhancements to the clubhouse surroundings, including improved visibility of the green and outdoor seating, provide an inviting space for members and spectators alike to enjoy the game.

Gratitude is extended to supporters such as Sport Wales Be Active Fund and the Village Tote, whose generous contributions, including a £500 donation, have bolstered the club's efforts in maintaining the green and expanding outreach programs for both youth and seniors in the community.

With a bustling fixture list for both men's and ladies' sections, the season promises excitement and camaraderie. Recognising the demands of modern life, the club offers opportunities for working individuals to participate, learn, and engage in league matches. The

men's team competes on Saturday afternoons, while the women's team recently joined an evening league, playing on both Tuesday evenings and Thursday afternoons.

The celebrations began as Gilwern Bowling Club marked the commencement of its 30th season with an Open Day on Saturday, April 13th. Our qualified coaches were on hand to guide newcomers through the basics. Anyone interested in visiting the Club and trying their hand at rolling some woods is welcome to drop in on Mondays from 4.30 to 6pm or by appointment on Sunday afternoons. All you need are flat, smooth -soled shoes.

For further details please contact:
Club Secretary via

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Facebook : Gilwern Community
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a chwmni i bob aelod. Trefnir y mudiad yn 13 rhanbarth ac mae 280 o ganghennau a chlybiau drwy gydol Cymru. Sefydlwyd Cangen y Fenni yn 2008 ac, erbyn hyn, mae bron 30 o aelodau yn cwrdd yn fisol rhwng mis Medi a mis Mehefin i gymdeithasu a gwneud gweithgareddau drwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg. Mae Merched y Wawr y Fenni yn cwrdd fel arfer ar yr ail nos Fawrth. Ceir rhaglen amrywiol gyda siaradwyr, nosweithiau bwyd, crefft, ac yn y blaen. Cynhelir rhai nosweithiau ar y cyd gyda Chymreigyddion y Fenni; megis ciniawau i ddathlu'r Nadolig a Gŵyl Dewi, dathlu'r Hen Galan gyda'r Fari Lwyd a'r gwasanaeth Plygain.

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The above gives details of two groups holding events through the medium of Welsh. It describes the background of the groups and gives a flavour of the programmes. Fluent Welsh speakers and learners welcome.

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In the run up to *Abergavenny Art Festival So Artrageous* would like to invite members of the community to create **THE BIG DOODLE**. Launching on 18th of May, you can 'Drop In and

Doodle' on one of the panels at So Artrageous, Lulworth House in Monk Street, Abergavenny NP7 5NP. The Studio will be open Tuesday to Saturday 11am until 4pm.

We don't want to be too prescriptive but thought that as Abergavenny has recently been declared the best place to live in Wales so we might have a loose theme of: "What you love about living in Abergavenny" but don't forget June is also Pride month so lots of rainbows will be expected.

There will also be an opportunity for local groups/clubs to get involved and create a group panel of their own. So, if you run a local group and would like to join in, please get in touch.

It is hoped that the **THE BIG DOODLE** will be completed during the fringe events of the Abergavenny Art festival on the

15th June and will then be on display at Abergavenny Pride on Saturday 29th June at St Mary's Priory.

In the meantime we are looking for some volunteer doodlers who might be available to assist and encourage participants along the way. Also, if anyone can offer any sponsorship or materials i.e. chunky marker pens etc we would be very grateful. We will also have a donations box in support of Abergavenny Arts Festival & Abergavenny Pride, two great free festivals that help to make Abergavenny a great place to live.

If you want to know more or would like to get involved in any way please call Pam on 07823517547 or email: pam.wesson@yahoo.co.uk

Pam Wesson

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Hardy Plant Society

The HPS Monmouthshire group is for people who love plants and gardening and enjoy sharing their enthusiasm. Non-members are very welcome to come along. It's an excellent opportunity to meet people with similar interests, to chat, enjoy refreshments and buy some plants. We'd love to see you. Talks take place at Little Mill Hall on the second Saturday of the month at 2.30pm. Refreshments are available and the talks last about 40 minutes. Sometimes, the group hosts Zoom talks or organises garden visits, discussions, dinners & plant sales. To keep in touch visit hpsmonmouthshire.co.uk

On Saturday 11th May at the Hall in Little Mill at 2.30pm, Roger Lloyd will give an illustrated talk entitled 'Hydrangeas – A Gentle Obsession'. Roger's talk will be an all-you-need-to-know, encyclopaedic account of growing hydrangeas.

Our fantastic Plant Sale is also on the 11th May at the Hall. We are hoping to have as many plants as possible for sale at all our talks in the Hall. The National Garden Scheme (NGS) Open Garden season is approaching and you can browse and plan your visits with the help of: findagarden.ngs.org.uk



The NGS has introduced a 'Gardens in Gwent for Private Group Visits'. If you like the idea of a private group visit see: ngs.org.uk/gwent-by-arrangement for more information.

Sue Wright



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Abergavenny Flower Arrangement Society



Have you ever wondered how to arrange the bunch of flowers given by your friend? The Abergavenny Flower Arrangement Society has the solution!

The club hosts monthly demonstrations by professional demonstrators who transform flowers and foliage into both modern and traditional styles while entertaining and offering tips on growing. The club also offers in-house competitions and opportunities to hone your skills with the help of a qualified tutor.

Founded over 60 years ago, the club has aided many churches and charities by using the interpretive floral skills of its members. Would you like to rise to the challenge of interpreting "The Lion King" or "Les Miserables"? You can visit these and many other arrangements at our forthcoming Flower Festival at St. Michael's Church Llanvihangel Crucorney. The club will present "There's No Business Like Show Business" from Friday, May 24th to Monday, May 27th, from 10 am to 5 pm.

CLUBS & GROUPS

We would love to welcome you to the festival, but we encourage you to join Abergavenny Flower Arranging Society, which meets on the 2nd Thursday of every month at The Guide Hall Fairfield at 2:15 pm.

You will be made very welcome, and we look forward to your "Friendship through Flowers".

Janet Davies



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Storytelling Live!



Storytelling Live meets in the Melville Centre on the third Monday of each month. We meet to tell and share stories! These can be stories that stem from our real life or stories that we have met in books/ media and through word of mouth.

The ancient skill of storytelling and song (humans have been telling stories from the beginning – round the fires that kept them

safe through the long nights, stories that made us laugh, gave us important information about our surroundings and made sense of the (unknown) is becoming lost in the speed of technology. Once a month the group meet to tell a story that strikes a chord with others who listen. Practice and honing of skills is important! Listening is part of the telling!

Telling a story is a dramatic act! It requires the teller to be aware of

an audience, to be sympathetic and exciting too. Some of our tellers have found that telling enhance their performance when they have to speak at meetings or lead teams at work. Others find that listening is calming and creates pictures in the mind that are almost meditational. Writers have joined us to experiment with the spoken word and to give first works an airing in a non-judgemental setting. Remembering a story and telling it to a group also is a workout for the brain! The health benefits of storytelling, social and mind work out are being found to enhance well being and brain health.

You will always find a welcome! Homemade cake and biscuits and light refreshments. Donations of £3 to cover the cost of the Melville Café hire. Park outside for easy access! Our next get together is 20th May and all are welcome.

Alison Newsam

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Greener Abergavenny was formed last year as a group of local member organisations joining with the common aim of facing up to the challenges of the climate emergency, resource depletion, and loss of biodiversity.

We are looking across the whole piece to include many aspects of the Green Economy and Green Future: Green Energy, Transport, reducing Waste, increasing Biodiversity, local Food and Farming, Green Education, Green Careers, even Green Health as well

as Campaign on issues of relevance to Abergavenny and the local area.

To do this we are working in 3 main areas bringing local people and groups together.

We organise a major "Green" Fair in the Market Hall in October, showcasing and celebrating the great green initiatives that are being taken by groups in the community as well as bringing other groups and experts from South Wales and beyond to share ideas and information. From sharing of Toys and Clothes to Energy Solutions Advice, from Benthgyl - the Library of Things, to Friends groups caring for our environment and gardens, from local education opportunities such as Black Mountain College and Careers Advice to many wildlife and nature conservation organisations, Active Transport and more.

We are increasing use of our social media to share news of events and opportunities of interest, from many of the groups in the area. We

are hoping to get a website started soon.

Finally, we are also working on a selection of projects and partnerships across a range of areas and hope to be able to share more about those opportunities in the near future and to include other events throughout the year.

To follow us, see our Facebook and Instagram feeds. At @greenerabergavenny. (<https://www.facebook.com/greenerabergavenny>)

We are looking for a range of skills to add to our team - organising the Fair, (as well as volunteers on the day), and to help us progress some of our publicity and project ideas. If you would like to be a part of this, please contact us at GreenerAbergavenny@gmail.com.

Do Save the Date for the next Greener Abergavenny Fair on Sunday October 20th, 10:30 am-4pm

*Gary Smith
Chair - Greener Abergavenny*

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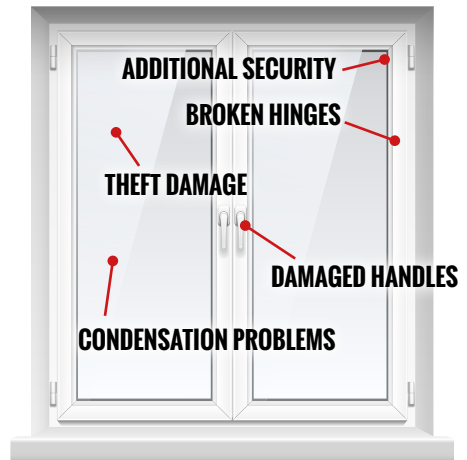


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If Not Now, When?

“See with clarity things as they *are*, not through distorted memories and apprehensions.”

~ Sydney Banks, *The Missing Link*

For years now, I've been saying the same thing, in many different ways: that underneath the ever-shifting weather of our thinking, we find the unchanging, ever-present light of well-being. And that there's nothing we need to *do*, to realise this – the peace of mind we all seek, is already there!

One of the most common initial responses I hear when working with clients is, “*Well, I get it intellectually, but...*” so here are some tips to help you really *live* this understanding.

1. TAKE ‘TRYING TO FEEL BETTER’ OFF YOUR TO DO LIST

Our whole lives, we've been brought up on a change model of ‘learn something, remember it and apply it’, so it's no surprise that we bring that same attitude to the domain of well-being. When learning, for instance, that our feelings are a reflection of thought, it's a common mistake to then become increasingly vigilant at *policing* our thoughts, or trying to *change* them, not noticing that the only tool we have at our disposal to do this is... more thought! You cannot think yourself out of a thinking problem.

Shifts in consciousness, however, require no effort. They happen by insight: those uncalled-for moments of clarity, where we see something we hadn't seen before, our perspective shifts, and the world just looks different as a result.

Enlightenment is *not* an intellectual process, however much your mind will insist that it knows what you need to do, have, or change to be happy. It has no relation to education, age, background or prosperity. It is simply a waking up to the nature of things.

2. LOOK TO YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE

If the path to life-contentment is via realisation, not willpower, then the only tool we *can* use, is awareness. Don't take my word for it, but become an amateur detective into your life experience and gather your *own* evidence for what I'm pointing to. (They're *your* insights after all, not mine.)

The mind loves rules and consequently tends to think rigidly, in black-and-white terms, for instance, “In Situation A, I *always* feel Emotion B.” So be on the lookout for times when these predictions fall apart. In spotting inconsistencies, you'll start to chip away at your conditioning, seeing it for the innocent, societally-imposed rubbish that it is.

Or notice the times you unexpectedly feel a sense of peace, and instead of letting the mind immediately pin this on to what you are doing, just let the pieces of the jigsaw fall into place of their own accord. Could that deep feeling of okayness simply be who you are; always there, waiting for you to fall into, when you're not distracted by the mind's chatter?

3. RELAX

If beating yourself up was going to work, it would probably have worked by now, so take it easy on yourself. (Look a little closer and you'll see that the whole notion of “beating yourself up” is simply one bit of mind activity arguing against another bit, so there *are* no answers to be found there!)

Peace of mind is here, now, always and there's no price for admission. The *only* thing required maybe is the humility to question everything you *thought* was true, about how life worked. But this in itself is a mouth-watering prospect. For if you're having a bad time of it and life looks grim... what if you'd been mistaken all this time?

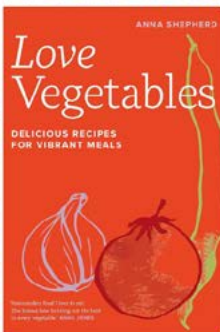
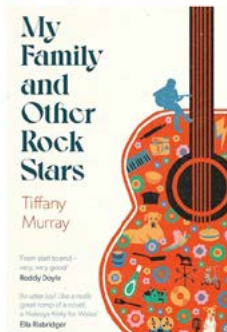
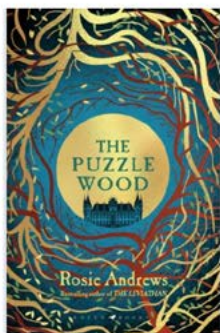
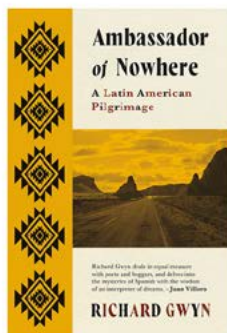
If you're going to embrace being wrong about something, then perhaps the most hopeful subject of all to choose is where, and when, to find happiness.

It's a lot closer than you think.



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Tip No.4 would be: Get the help of a trusted guide! In June, I will be running my flagship, much-loved, life-changing 6 week programme. The RECONNECT Course is live, online and is open to all. Learn more at gilescroft.com/reconnect/. I'd love to see you there!



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This month's wonderfully curated list of what deserves space on your bookshelf, as recommended by the Booksellers at Book-ish.



Young Hag
Isabel Greenberg £20

Young Hag has grown up believing her mother and grandmother are the last witches in the land. But when tragedy strikes, she turns her back on these tales. Where is their magic when they really need it? Then one day they find a changeling in the woods. Confronted with real magic at last, Young Hag has no choice but to believe. She sets off on the greatest quest of her life; but can Young Hag bring the magic back? Or will she become a footnote in the tale of famous kings and wizards? Young Hag ingeniously reinvents the women in Arthurian legend, transforming the tales of old into a heart-warming coming-of-age story.



How They Broke Britain
James O'Brien £10.99

Bold and incisive as ever, James O'Brien reveals the shady network of influence that has created a broken Britain of strikes, shortages and scandals. He maps the web connecting dark think tanks to Downing Street, the journalists involved in selling it to the public and the media bosses pushing their own agendas. Over ten chapters, each focusing on a particular person complicit in the downfall, James O'Brien reveals how a select few have conspired - sometimes by incompetence, sometimes by design - to bring Britain to its knees.



Tir – The Story of the Welsh Landscape

Carwyn Graves £18.99
In Tir – the Welsh word for 'land' – writer and ecologist Carwyn Graves takes us on a tour of seven key elements of the Welsh landscape, such as the ffridd, or mountain pasture, and the rhos, or wild moorland. By diving deep into the history and ecology of each of these landscapes, we discover that Wales, in all its beautiful variety, is at base just as much a human cultural creation as a natural phenomenon: its raw materials evolved alongside the humans that have lived here since the ice receded.



The Doll Twin
Janine Beacham
£7.99

Una Wexford is thrilled to be adopted after the great war, but an eerie secret lurks in her new home - a life sized animated copy of herself. Is 'Ani' as innocent as she seems or does she want to steal Una's new family - and her life?

73 Dove Street
Julie Owen Moylan £9.99

Deftly recreating the oppressive society of 1950s London, this captivating thriller from the author of *That Green Eyed Girl* centres on the female occupants of a shabby boarding house as their dark secrets catch up with them.



James Percival Everett £20

James is an enthralling and ferociously funny novel that leaves an indelible mark, forcing us to see Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in a wholly new and transformative light. From the shadows of Huck Finn's mischievous spirit, Jim emerges to reclaim his voice, defying the conventions that have consigned him to the margins. Shortlisted for the 2022 Booker Prize for his novel *The Trees*, Professor Percival Everett is one of the most decorated writers of our lifetime.





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Piety and Power

Gwladys Ddu and William ap Thomas rose from relative obscurity before starting one of the most powerful dynasties in Wales. Helen Morgan from Abergavenny Local History Society reports.

William was in the Welsh contingent who fought for Henry V at Agincourt in 1415. He was later knighted, began building Raglan Castle in the 1430s and died in 1445. Gwladys, the Star of Gwent, who died nine years later, married twice. Her first husband was Sir Roger Vaughan of Bredwardine who died at Agincourt alongside Gwladys's father Davy Gam, a minor squire from Gwent. Six years later she married William, a widower whose first wife, Elizabeth, had been heiress to Raglan. He and Elizabeth had no children, and he bought the estate from her family.

His marriage to Gwladys was not a love match. Theirs was a business strategy on their way up the social ladder. When she died in 1454, she was commemorated by the Welsh bards and described as a power behind the scenes. Legend tells us that 3,000 mourners followed her body from Coldbrook House (on Skirrid Fach) to St Mary's. Her tomb reflects the priorities and beliefs of women in late medieval Wales, says Professor Madeleine Gray. The effigy wears an elaborate, embroidered butterfly head dress and mantle. At her feet are two dogs: symbols of devotion and fidelity. "This couple's tomb is one of the glories of St Mary's priory church. I believe this to be a tomb designed and

commissioned by Gwladys." William's effigy wears armour that is fashionable in the mid-15th century but too contemporary for a man in his sixties. "The panels of apostles and prophets are unusual on a tomb, as is the carving of the story of the Annunciation."

Their son William was the first to take the surname Herbert. He became Earl of Pembroke, and guardian to the future Henry VII — establishing an important connection with the Tudors. He and his brother Richard supported the Yorkists in the War of the Roses. This affiliation to Edward IV played a vital role in the family's ascent to power. The chapel where they lie is now known as the Herbert chapel because so many of Gwladys and William's descendants are buried here.

Madeleine Gray's talk on Gwladys Ddu and William ap Thomas at the Borough Theatre on May 22 follows the AGM, starting at 7.30pm. Please book your seat via the Borough Theatre website or in person. Admission is free to members. For details on joining visit abergavennylocalhistorysociety.org.




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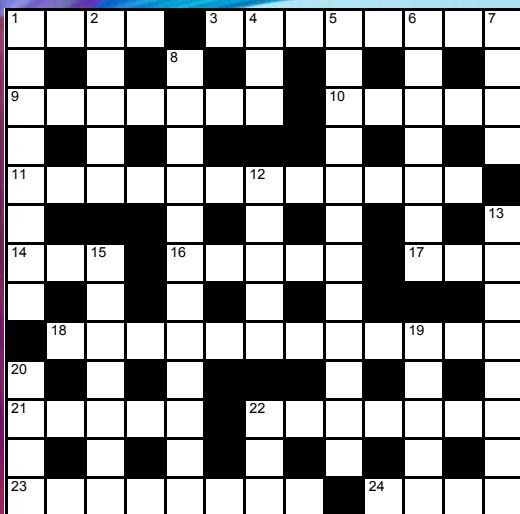
Quick Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Stove (4)
- 3 Confessed (8)
- 9 Remove (7)
- 10 Tall structure (5)
- 11 Current (12)
- 14 Married woman (3)
- 16 Smooth surface (5)
- 17 Perceive (3)
- 18 Clarifications (12)
- 21 Fine porcelain (5)
- 22 Passion (7)
- 23 Calamity (8)
- 24 Small room (4)

DOWN

- 1 Conquer (8)
- 2 Devoured (5)
- 4 Small spot (3)
- 5 Road junction (12)
- 6 Defeats (7)
- 7 Terrible (4)
- 8 Butterfly larva (12)
- 12 Simple (5)
- 13 Private (8)
- 15 A swinging time? (7)
- 19 Small fruit (5)
- 20 Not alkali (4)
- 22 Female sheep (3)



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