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"BALANCE"
FEATURE INSIDE



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Dear Readers,



Life is busy isn't it, but particularly during the summer months. I find myself trying to keep multiple plates spinning. I am certain I am not alone in this. I think it's a daily struggle for each of us to find balance in this modern world, which is why we've put together a special feature all about balance for you to enjoy. Balance can mean different things and people have different takes on it from literal balance and how good that is for our bodies, to letting go of worrying about seeking and finding balance entirely. Whichever way you look at it, our feature is designed to help you along the way or offer you an alternative perspective.

Lots more to enjoy this month, particularly our community articles as well as featured editorials from some of our local businesses. And, don't forget, if you find yourself with a moment wondering how to fill it (especially during the school holidays), turn to our events section where you'll find a whole host of local happenings.

Enjoy this months read and the remainder of the summer!

Hannah

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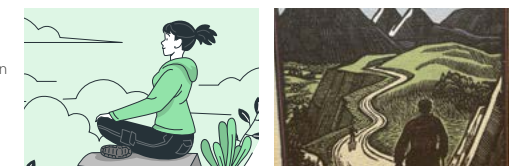
Powys County Council
Powys National Garden Scheme

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Our Plot

Creative Community Sessions at Peak Cymru



This summer, we launched Our Plot, a community gardening group for local adults led by gardener Eileen Williams-Sweet. It's a friendly group who meet at drop-in sessions fortnightly on Thursday afternoons to tend to the vegetables and flowers they have planted in raised beds on the former playground and car park at the Old School, Crickhowell. As they work towards growing the ingredients of an autumn harvest feast, the group are also being guided by a variety of visiting creative practitioners. They have learnt to weave plant supports from willow with Wyldwood Willow, and are working with Melanie Made Mud to create ceramic plates, bowls and cups with pressed leaf designs for the community meal, as well as sessions through the summer including natural textile dying and fermenting and pickling vegetables.

Alongside this, we are running a parallel programme, Play/Ground, a series of creative workshops for 14-18 year olds to experiment with

artistic and design practices in relation to the community garden. Hosted by artist and designer Sahra Hersi, and working alongside a variety of creative practitioners, horticulturalists and ecologists, the group of young people are meeting every month to imagine and explore the different aspects of a community garden.

We look forward to sharing this growing space with as many people as possible, and to celebrate nature, creativity and collaboration in all its forms. To get in involved with either group, please email polly@peak.cymru. Both groups are free to attend, and 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.

Polly Hunter

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.

Powys County Council want your Feedback on 20mph



and many of you have already got in touch. But there is still time to hear from anyone else who thinks that a specific road in their area should change from 20mph to 30mph, change from 30mph to 20mph or stay at 20mph.

"When you email us, please be clear and precise about which section of road you are talking about and give reasons for your views.

"Welsh Government has asked us to keep listening and receiving comments until the end of August. At this point we will begin reviewing all the feedback alongside the new exceptions guidance and consider if it is appropriate for the speed limit to change. This is likely to take several months and will go through the proper process and, where necessary, including public consultation.

"If you would like to get in touch about the 20mph speed limit in your area, please email traffic@powys.gov.uk"

Powys County Council cannot act on general comments about the 20mph national policy, as this is a matter for the Welsh Government. The council are not responsible for trunk roads, if your feedback is for a trunk road, please email TrunkRoads20mph@gov.wales. To find out which roads in Powys are trunk roads, please visit Datamap Wales.

Powys County Council will be accepting suggestions via email until 31 August 2024.

Powys County Council

In April 2024, Welsh Government revealed plans to listen to the people of Wales and work with councils to deliver targeted change to the implementation of the national 20mph speed limit.

Residents and businesses have been able to email Powys County Council with their suggestions, along with valid reasons, why a road in the county should change from 20mph to 30mph, change from 30mph to 20mph or support staying at 20mph.

All feedback received by 31 August will then be considered against the parameters within the guidance recently published by Welsh Government setting 30mph limits on restricted roads. Any section of road deemed

suitable for a change, either back to 30mph or down to 20mph, will be collated, identified on a map and shared with local members and Town and Community Councils for any further comment.

Following this, any recommendations to change the speed limits will then be subject to a legal statutory traffic regulation order (TRO) process, which will include a public consultation, before any changes are implemented.

Clr Jackie Charlton, Cabinet Member for a Greener Powys urges residents and businesses to get in touch if they would like their views on local speed limits listened too as part of this review. "Listening to our communities is really important to us in Powys

OUR PLOT

Do you live in or near Crickhowell?
Want to join a community gardening group?

Our Plot – Ein Darn o Dir – is a new drop-in group for adults of all ages to come together and learn new skills with gardener Eileen Williams-Sweet. Over the summer, we're planting and growing an experimental community garden, culminating in an Autumn harvest feast using ceramics and table linen made in the workshops.

Upcoming Thursday sessions, 1:30–4:30pm
Sesiynau i ddod ar ddydd Iau, 1:30–4:30yp

<p style="font-size: 12px; color: #2e7d32;">25th July Ceramics workshop</p>	<p style="font-size: 12px; color: #2e7d32;">22nd August Natural dying workshop</p>	<p style="font-size: 12px; color: #2e7d32;">October dates and community feast to be confirmed</p>
<p style="font-size: 12px; color: #2e7d32;">8th August Ceramics workshop</p>	<p style="font-size: 12px; color: #2e7d32;">12th September Fermentation and pickling workshop</p>	<p style="font-size: 12px; color: #2e7d32; font-weight: bold;">Croeso i bawb</p>

EMAIL: polly@peak.cymru peakcymru.org/ourplot CALL: 01873 811579

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Helping Organisations; Improving People's Lives



Photo credit: Lewis Chatfield

The recent volunteer awards evening

Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations (PAVO) - is the County Voluntary Council for Powys and our mission is 'helping organisations; improving peoples lives'. Volunteering in Powys is estimated to be worth £1,437,652,174, every year, according to new research. It is estimated that in Powys 42% of the population volunteers.

The Voluntary Sector provides a range of services and support that can support local communities and complement existing public service provision, often filling gaps in service and helping meet a range of needs. Which is why your local Citizens Advice, carers support, mental health support, cancer support, men shed, village hall, gallery, arts group, community transport and many more are often run by volunteers. They give their time freely to make our county and our lives better.

If you could support your local community in a volunteer role, please contact us:

Email volunteering@pavo.org.uk or telephone 01597 822191

It is reported that volunteering is good for the health and well-being of the volunteer. A massive body of research has accumulated in the study of volunteering, and demonstrates the benefits. For people over 50, some of the benefits are astonishing. Here are five reasons volunteering is good for you: longer life, better cognition and general mental health, overall better health, better social relationships, and life satisfaction. Volunteering can also improve paid employment opportunities.

Trustee roles are vital for the running of voluntary organisations across Powys and they cannot run without

the support of individuals in the community. Being a trustee is an important responsibility and requires an understanding of and commitment to 'good governance'. For some this may be a barrier to supporting a local voluntary group or charity: but there are other ways. Not only is PAVO doing all it can to help find people willing to be Trustees, we are also looking for volunteer Mentors – people with skills to share, particularly business skills such as business and strategic planning, finance management and fundraising, marketing, media and IT.

If you have a few hours or days to spare to support the voluntary sector in Powys, maybe with your local group, or a charity trying to serve all of Powys we would very much like to hear from you. You could volunteer as a trustee or as a Mentor to help those vital groups to improve the skills they need to flourish. – Please get in touch and we will help you to help the people volunteering to make things better for the county and its people.

volunteering@pavo.org.uk

01597 822191

Melissa Townsend





ORIEL TWR
tower gallery
CRICKHOWELL



Robert Macdonald

Robert has lived permanently on the Penpont estate near Brecon since the late 1980s.

Recently he began combining the use of ink pens with his painting which gives his work a freedom of expression which suits his emotional approach to picture-making. When he left New Zealand for the first time in 1958 he did so as crew member of a small sailing ship which called in at all the small inlet harbours along Northland's Pacific coast, and memories of this voyage infuse some of his most recent paintings.

Philippine Sowerby

Philippine has just returned to her studio after a disruptive year and is looking at ways to share her experience of change.

One of her major pieces on show is a work of reconstruction, a broken box built back, held together with new supports. You will find in this work fragility and strength interlinked and interdependent, as well as the play of darkness with light, and space with structure.



Thursday 25th July to Sunday 22nd September
Opening times, Thursday - Sunday 12pm - 5pm

Also showing are members of the Usk Valley Artists' Co-operative
Hannah Firmin, Graeme Galvin, Veronica Gibson, Lesley Lillywhite, Kath Littler, Harriet Lloyd.

49 High Street, Crickhowell, NP8 1BH - Tel 01873 812495
www.towergallery.co.uk

Card Recycling Banks to be Removed from Community Recycling Sites



Card recycling banks will soon be removed from the community recycling sites across the county.

When community recycling sites were first introduced there were no kerbside recycling collections. The sole purpose of these sites was to allow residents to recycle household items close to home. However, with the weekly kerbside recycling service now well established, card, along with other items, can be easily recycled from home.

"The decision to remove card recycling banks was agreed by the cabinet earlier this year." Explains Cllr Jackie Charlton, Cabinet Member for a Greener Powys. "Although initially identified as a budget saving, it is also a duplication of service, the removal therefore allows us to concentrate our stretched resources on fulfilling the weekly kerbside collections.

"If anyone is struggling to fit all their recycling into their kerbside containers, they can request additional boxes online."

"We appreciate there are some regular users of the card recycling banks, but if broken up and added to your blue recycling box, card can easily be recycled each week from home. If anyone is struggling to fit all their recycling into their kerbside containers, they can request additional boxes online. Larger amounts of card can still be taken to any of the five Household Waste Recycling Centres across Powys."

The removal of these banks also ensures they can no longer be abused by fly-tippers contaminating the material with non-recyclable waste or used illegally by businesses. Businesses needing a recycling collection service can contact the Powys Commercial Recycling team for a free quote: commercial.recycling@powys.gov.uk or call 01597 810829

Powys County Council

"Larger amounts of card can still be taken to any of the five Household Waste Recycling Centres across Powys"



Synergy, an award-winning male voice close harmony acapella choir are offering a free four week long 'Learn to Sing' course starting on Thursday 12th September between 7pm and 8:30pm at the choir's rehearsal venue, The St Michaels Centre, Abergavenny, NP7 5UD. This will be followed by three further Thursday sessions and culminating in an evening concert on Saturday 5th October.

find out which part their voice best suits. During the course singers will learn:

- Vocal warm ups
- Singing technique and exercises
- Learning two songs from Synergy's extensive repertoire to perform with Synergy in the evening Concert in October.

We can assure you that you don't need to read music or be an accomplished solo singer, its

our blend of parts that gives us our unique sound different to a traditional Male Voice Choir. Just come along, have fun and enjoy the experience without obligation. You will be made most welcome.

To register your interest just fill out the online section at www.synergysingers.co.uk/lts or contact our Chairman Grant on 07957 872996. Check out events on the website to see and hear us perform.

Synergy, led by our talented young Musical Director Owen McCarthy, are fresh from recent success winning best UK choir under 40 voices at the prestigious *Cornish International Male Voice Choir Competition* in May held at Truro Cathedral, scoring highly and coming 3rd place in the overall competition including larger choirs. This is the third occasion Synergy have won the accolade repeating success in 2011 and 2013.

Boasting only 25 singers on stage, Synergy are looking to use this success to expand and are seeking new voices to supplement the 4 parts that make up their sound: Tenors, Leads, Baritones and Basses.

This free course to males over the age of 18 offers the opportunity to sing on stage with Synergy and

AUGUST EVENTS CALENDAR

NOW UNTIL 22ND SEPTEMBER TOWER GALLERY EXHIBITION



Thursdays – Sundays 12pm-5pm
Tower Gallery, 49 High St, Crickhowell
See Page 8 for info

3RD AUGUST BRECON COUNTY SHOW



Visit www.breconcountyshow.co.uk for info

4TH, 9TH-11TH, 17TH-18TH AUGUST BRECON JAZZ FESTIVAL

Organised over three weekends in August, with 6 days of music and fun as well as 20 ticketed concerts!

For tickets visit www.breconjazz.org/tickets

8TH AUGUST CERAMICS WORKSHOP

A creative community session at Peak Cymru Old School Crickhowell
See Advert on Page 4 for more info

16TH-18TH AUGUST VOLKSFEST WALES 2024

11am, Watton Show Fields, Brecon
Visit volksfest.wales for more info

22ND AUGUST NATURAL DYING WORKSHOP

A creative community session at Peak Cymru Old School Crickhowell
See Advert on Page 4 for more info

25TH AUGUST LLANGYNIDR AGRICULTURAL SHOW

A wonderful family day out in the heart of the Brecon Beacons. We pack a lot into this one day event. From agricultural, horticultural and craft competitions, to craft demonstrations, sheep shearing and family activities, we are sure you'll be kept busy just deciding what to do next!

<https://www.jumblebee.co.uk/llangynidragriculturalshow2024>

3RD SEPTEMBER Book-ish Event ALIS HAWKINS – THE SKELETON ARMY

7.30pm, Book-ish Loft, Crickhowell
See Page 28 for prices and booking info

5TH SEPTEMBER Book-ish Event BARBARA ERSKINE – THE STORY SPINNER

2pm, Manor Hotel, Crickhowell
See Page 28 for prices and booking info

12TH SEPTEMBER LEARN TO SING WITH SYNERGY

7pm, St Michael's Centre, Abergavenny. See page opposite for info

12TH SEPTEMBER FERMENTATION AND PICKLING WORKSHOP

A creative community session at Peak Cymru Old School Crickhowell
See Advert on Page 4 for more info

19TH SEPTEMBER Book-ish Event PETER JAMES – ONE OF US IS DEAD

7.30pm, Blaenavon Workmen's Hall
See Page 28 for prices and booking info

21ST-22ND SEPTEMBER ABERGAVENTNY FOOD FESTIVAL

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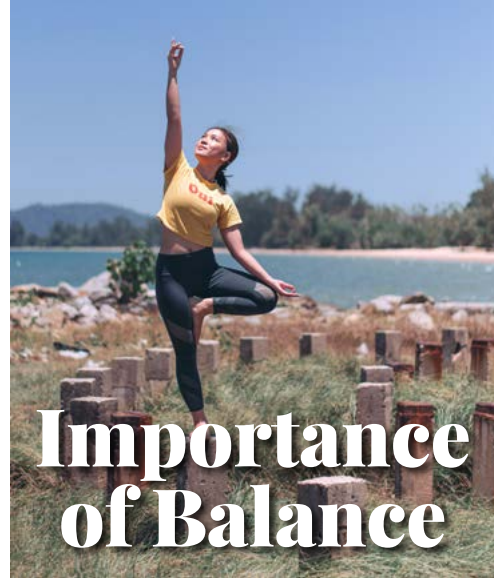


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Importance of Balance

According to the NHS, around 1 in 3 adults over the age of 65 who live at home will fall at least once per year. Maintaining balance is crucial, especially as we age and it is within our power to improve it. One of the most remembered tips from the late doctor Michael Mosley was standing on one leg whilst cleaning your teeth. It's a tiny thing, but accessible to so many of us and well worth incorporating into our daily routine if we want to help prevent unnecessary falls and associated injuries.

But it needn't stop there. Making all of our muscles stronger around the pelvis and spine, not just the legs, will give us an even better chance of preventing a fall. Having good balance means that we can control our body's position whether moving or standing still and the best overall exercise to help, from my experience, is Pilates. It will make us stronger, more flexible and ultimately more stable. Working on specific muscles to tone and strengthen them while keeping the core engaged helps us to have better control of our body and therefore our balance, and any good Pilates class will incorporate balance exercises as part of the session.

Here are some simple balance challenges you can try at home. Remember that working on your balance should always be difficult and feel like you might wobble. By challenging the body in this way, you will gain strength and endurance and slowly start to see improvements. When trying the exercises below, remember these simple tips:

- Have the back of a chair or windowsill nearby that you can easily grab hold of if you feel unsteady.

- If possible, try not to keep putting your foot down but rather hold onto to chair when you wobble. This will fatigue the leg more quickly and help strengthen the muscles.
- Try not to grip onto muscles or lock the knee but allow things to be soft and move (if you are too tense you also may notice you are holding your breath!).
- Make sure your hip joint is in line with the middle of the knee and second toe, and that your kneecap is facing forwards.
- Keep your weight in the middle of your foot
 1. Can you stand with both feet touching together and maintain your balance easily for 1 minute?
 2. Can you stand on one leg easily for at least 30 seconds?
 3. Can you stand on one leg easily for 30 seconds with your eyes closed?
 4. Can you move your trunk forwards and backwards or rotate your spine while standing on one leg for 30 seconds or more?

Try to practice daily and remember that consistency is the key to success in anything we do. Little and often, bit by bit, change starts to happen.

Kate Thomas

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Put Balance in the Bin!



I'm a working parent in a neurodivergent family so transitioning from the school routine, adjusting my working schedule, juggling vacations, additional social expectations, increased shopping, feeding & housekeeping, AND feeling I ought to enjoy this time- can be a lot.

Ergo, my hot take is to throw the idea of Balance in the bin, especially if it makes you feel like you're failing again.

Try exploring some tools which help realise your desired life, by identifying how you want TO FEEL, ahead of things TO DO. Feelings of choice, agency, joy, connection, energy- these often matter more than a vague, imposed ideal.

First, lean into things as they

are. Mindfully accepting life in all its messy unfolding. Most of us are more blessed than we appreciate.

Automate all you can- bills, dentist appts, online shopping (yes you CAN eat the same meals for a month-it's fine!). Stick things on repeat so they require minimal energy from you. Similarly, outsource whatever you can afford- cleaner, dog walker, handyperson. Consider them investments in your sanity. If that's not affordable, organise a body doubling date... quite often having another person in our space can motivate us into clearing those backlogged tasks... garden clean up plus Summer BBQ?

Set a 20 minute timer for EVERYTHING. Cooking, cleaning, emails, playing with the kids, booking that weekend break. If

the thought of starting something overwhelms you, AND then you get sucked in & can't stop- set the timer.

Apply this to leisure activities too- especially if you feel guilty for 'indulging' in relaxation... permission to just do 20 minutes can be very freeing. It can also help avoid choice paralysis- that run, coffee date, library, Netflix binge, new book...? Remember that there is more time! So choose one for 20 minutes & either carry on, or switch. If you're addicted to multitasking, lean into that shamelessly! Have a podcast on while you walk, watch TV while riding your stationary bike, get the kids off their devices & tire the dog simultaneously by setting up a Crufts course.

Embody how you want to feel by choosing process over product. Let go of an idealised end result... a clean house at the end of a fun family day might be delusional. Not every task has to be completed today.

Find Balance across the whole of life you're curating, striving for flow rather than struggling for perfectly weighted scales. Consider it across a hopefully long lifetime. Sometimes work, sickness, or family dominate, often it's just the humdrum of daily do. But committing to whatever connects you most to the emotional quality of your life (for me it's Peace Over Productivity), will eventually give permission for what you really find worthwhile.

Becky Bond
Body & Earth Holistics



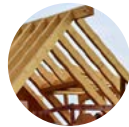
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Dyffryn Cawnon Walk

A walk around the beautiful Dyffryn Cawnon valley. If you're a fan of great views, mossy woods, and don't suffer from vertigo too much, this is a great walk! However, there are some very steep drops and a lot of uneven ground so I wouldn't recommend it to novice walkers, or indeed, in wet weather. Be sure to wear stout walking boots too. The walk is just under 4 miles long.



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Nant Ddu

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Nant Pyrgad

Cefn-crûg

Pyrgad Farm

To Llangynidr →

To Get There

From the Red Lion pub in Llangynidr, follow Duffryn Road up and out of the village. Continue down the Dyffryn Cawnon valley for about 4 miles. The walk begins at a gate to a bridleway beside Pyrgad farm, where a small stream (the Nant Pyrgad) meets the road. There isn't a great deal of space to park here and you must be careful not to block the narrow road or hinder any farm traffic. You can always park further up or down the lane if there's no room here.

Directions are Overleaf...

Both natural and man-made changes may have occurred since this walk was written. Focus Magazines cannot guarantee that the route is passable. Walking in working woods and quarry workings can be hazardous and is undertaken at your own risk; Focus Magazines cannot take any responsibility for any inconvenience or injury.



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1 Go through the gate and follow the track up hill. The bridleway enters the woods and climbs fairly steeply. Look out for the small waterfall on the way (a).



2 The track leaves the wood and goes through a gate. Once the trees on the right end, you can turn right and cut across and up to join a wide roadway. There is actually a stile and footpath through the wood that cuts the corner off, but it looked a bit dank and unpleasant in there! Alternatively, just stick to the track, and it will reach the roadway.



3 When you reach the road, turn right (West) and walk a short way along the roadway to where a bridleway branches off to the right. Look out for the Aneurin Bevan heritage trail plaque here, but be careful on the road; it is used by large quarry trucks.



4 Follow the bridleway as it skirts the edge of the woods below. When you find yourself facing Trefil quarry works, the track splits. If you'd like a quick look at the old works, the left hand track will take you back up to the road and an impressive cutting that the road goes through (b). However, I wouldn't recommend going any further than this, as the area is quite dangerous. The right hand track continues to skirt the edge of the steeply bowled end of the the Dyffryn Crawnion valley. Look

out for old lime kilns on the left.



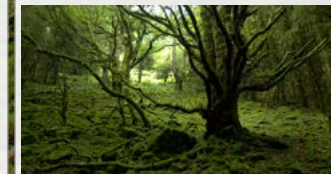
5 When you reach a wooden footbridge, cross it and continue through the gate. The bridleway nominally continues, but horse riders and cyclists are advised not to use it; and you'll see why; it is very narrow in places with very steep drops to the right. Be very careful! Continue along the path and over a stile.



6 Cross a small stream (dried up when we went) and continue for about a third of a mile to another wooden gate. Immediately after this gate, our route goes sharp right, downhill into the woods – but you may want to continue on another couple of hundred metres to a view down the valley from where the Nant Ddu crosses the path (c) – If so, have a look and then head back to the gate.



7 Take the path down into the woods. After a short way, the path hairpins back left until it reaches the Nant Ddu, then it sharply turns right again. The forest floor here is covered thickly with moss and is really quite beautiful. A blue waymark on a wooden post will reassure you that you are going the right way.



8 When the path branches, a yellow waymark points straight on and blue points downhill to the left. Follow the blue waymark.

9 The path abruptly stops as a wide logging track cuts across it. I couldn't see where the proper footpath continued on the other side of the track, (but if you can – by all means, follow it) so I turned right onto the track and followed it to the end where a small brook passes underneath the track.



10 Where the track ends, you will see a grassy bank ahead, with a wire fence running along it. I climbed onto the bank and followed the fence downhill, alongside the stream.



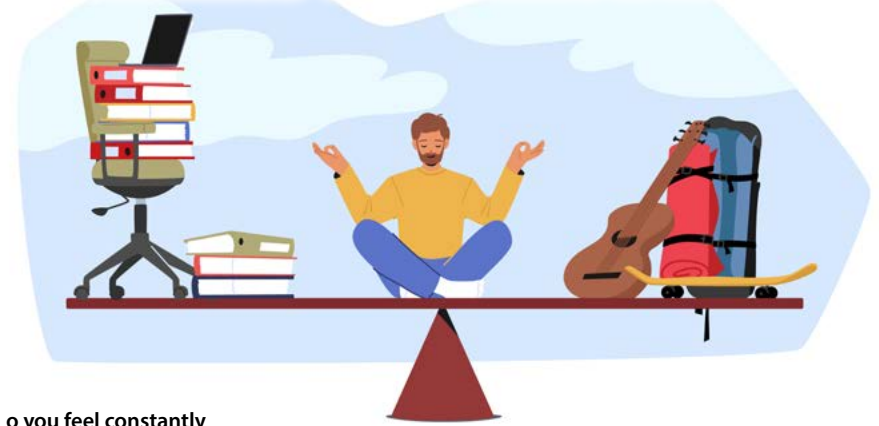
11 When I reached a small wooden footbridge, (presumably where the proper path arrives), I turned to my right and went over the stile there.



12 Follow the walled footpath along the edge of a field and then through 90 degrees and along the valley. Go through a metal gate and then through 3 wooden ones (the last two in quick succession)

13 Follow the lane past the buildings at Cefn-crug and on to where you started at Pyrgad Farm.

10 Tips to Help you Achieve a Healthier Work Life Balance



Do you feel constantly overworked and burnt out? Have you neglected personal relationships and hobbies? Are you failing to prioritise self-care, like getting adequate sleep and leisure time? It might be time to consider how to strike a better work-life balance. We've put together a short, non-exhaustive list of ideas that open up the possibility of improving your work-life balance.

1. Plan ahead:

Plan ahead to combine work activities with leisure, social, or fitness activities. Try taking a call outside (if noise permits) or invite a friend over to work with you.

2. Block your time:

Designate blocks of time for different tasks, such as checking and responding to messages.

3. Embrace the way the brain works:

Our brain works best in short, focused bursts. Block out distractions so you can make the most of this time, and then stop for a break.

4. End work at a certain time:

Establishing this boundary and sticking to it is important. Set a time to end work for the day, and reinforce it by powering down work-related devices, locking your office, or scheduling something afterward.

5. Use technology to help you:

Use an app to block websites that might distract you during work and then block work tools after hours. Keep at least one device work-free if you can, so that you can disconnect completely.

6. Go out for lunch:

Even if you're working from home, go out from time to time. The change of pace this encourages is refreshing in itself and, if you tend to eat on the run or at your desk, it's a good practice in being more present.

7. Take time off:

Don't work through illness. Personal time, holidays, and bereavement leave are vital and important ways to nourish your well-being.

8. Communicate with your manager:

It's all too easy to feel like we're not doing enough. Talk to your manager about what work is a priority and, if there is too much to do, open up a discussion with them about streamlining tasks or taking on additional help in the form of more workers.

9. Find something you love outside of work:

If you have something that you're excited about doing after work, it will make it easier to disconnect from work messages or end your day at a predetermined time. Our hobbies boost our energy and vitality. When we play and feel creative, we bring our fresh selves back to work.



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Kotsu-Kotsu

In Japanese, the term kotsu-kotsu means 'step-by-step,' with the idea being to focus on the present and not the ultimate goal. Not dwelling on the past or worrying over the future. Not multi-tasking. Not being distracted with a million different things. Kotsu-kotsu is about being fully present in this moment, right now, breath by breath.



Finding Balance Through Embracing The Messy Side Of Life

As we all know, Life can get messy at times! But then look at Nature. In untamed spaces she too can initially appear untidy and even unruly, but if we look more closely there is much to value and celebrate in her beautiful, wonderful, wild essence.

Often, we humans crave order and neatness, but Nature follows her own rules, colouring outside the lines and shaking things up. Her winds roar, her sun blazes, her tides crash powerfully, yet she can be as gentle as a soft breeze or tender rain. Vast like space or tiny like a single-celled organism, Nature is full of beautiful patterns and repetition, yet with each individual being completely unique. She ebbs and flows with the seasons, tides, days and nights, providing us with

food, water, and shelter. She may appear to be chaotic and yet, ultimately, she is working towards balance – and in this she has much to teach us.

Humans often believe we can outdo Nature, thinking we aren't bound by her laws. Yet, disconnecting from these natural laws and leaning too much on our logical left-brain dominated ways, without the balance of our more creative side, and our heart and gut, often leads to problems.

For example, in our society we often equate busyness with value and productivity, but maintaining a healthy balance requires periods of simply BEing rather than constantly DOing. This isn't just about physical rest but also mental and emotional rest. As someone once said to

me, "You can't fill the bathtub unless you put in the plug!"

Like our bodies, Nature is a bio-logical, intelligent system designed to function interdependently, constantly seeking balance. In fact, I prefer to think of this as "balance-ing" (a verb rather than a noun) to reflect dynamic, changing, and responsive action rather than a static state.

It's about being true to yourself, finding the balance that works for you and allowing your true light to shine.



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Llangorse based Silver Assist Homecare Named One of the Best in Wales

Silver Assist Homecare has been named one of the best home care providers in Wales. The award is based on reviews provided by the people they care for, plus their friends and relatives.

Brecon's sector leading home care provider has been named one of the best in Wales. Silver Assist Homecare has won an award as a top 20 home care provider in the country.

The accolade comes via the leading reviews site for home care, www.homecare.co.uk, which hosts the awards to help people find care that is right for their needs, budget and location.

There are 391 home care providers in Wales and 12,578 home care providers in the UK.

Nearly a million disabled and older people receive care at home so they can continue to live independently in their own homes. This includes help with getting dressed, washed, preparing meals and drinks and administering medication.

Amanda Hopkins, reviews manager of homecare.co.uk said: "Good quality home care is so important as it means people can get the help and support they need so they can continue to live independently in their own homes. "Home care workers play a vital role in keeping people who are less mobile, due to age, illness or disability, both mentally and physically well. "

"Silver Assist Homecare has shown it provides care of the highest quality and we would like to congratulate it on being one of the top home care providers in Wales."

Managing Director, Samantha Denne said: "We are delighted to be recognised as one of the Top 20 homocare providers in Wales!

"This tremendous achievement within our first year of trading is huge, and in no small part down the wonderful team we have here at Silver Assist.

"Thank you to our customers and their families for sharing your experiences using our service. We hope we continue to deliver on our promise of quality focused support that you can trust."

Silver Assist Homocare are currently taking on new clients and new members of staff, they have an industry leading staff benefits and welfare package for their home care employees.

Silver Assist Homocare

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Powys National Garden Scheme



I listened to BBC Radio 4's *Just One Thing* - with the late Michael Mosley when he spoke to Dr Edith Chen. Her studies show that by boosting your mood and empathy, volunteering can lower chronic inflammation, cholesterol and even help you lose weight. It's also a great way to meet new people! Our success would not be possible without the dedicated support of the charity's garden owners and its volunteers.

Volunteers take on a number of roles from county organisers and treasurers to publicity and social media support, each one ensuring the smooth running of National Garden Scheme openings. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Susan Paynton, details above. Or meet a volunteer at a garden opening:

NGS

Date	Time		Garden
Thur 1 Aug	2-5pm	£5	Gilwern Barn, Beulah LD5 4YG. Pre-booking essential
Fri 2 Aug	10-4pm	£5	Welsh Lavender, Cefnperfedd Uchaf, Maesmynis, Builth Wells LD2 3HU Pre-booking essential
Sun 4 Aug	12-5pm	£7	Bryngwyn Hall, Bwlch-y-Cibau, Llanfyllin SY22 5LJ
Sun 4 Aug	2-5pm	£4	The Meadows, Carno Road, Caersws SY17 5JA
Sat 17 & Sun 18 Aug	11-5pm	£6	Llanidloes Gardens, map and tickets at Compton's Yard Great Oak Street and The Hanging Gardens Bethel Street, Llanidloes SY18 6BS
Sun 18 Aug	2-5pm	£5	Brookside, Llanbister, Llandrindod Wells LD1 6TW
Sat 31 Aug, Sun 1 Sept	11.30-5pm	£5	Aberangell, Old Coach House, Dolcorsllwyn, Machynlleth SY20 9AB

Did you visit the Royal Welsh Show and find among the ten Micro Show Gardens a yellow National Garden Scheme sign and the small yellow signs giving 'sound bites' of information about how the NGS supports nursing and health care charities? If you have a garden you would like to share with others, live in a village, hamlet or road where three or four of you have gardens you think others might like to visit, please contact Susan Paynton, Regional Chair Wales and the Marches, 01686 650531 or susan.paynton@ngs.org.uk

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Labels are for Jars

"Diagnosis is a trap."
~ Dr Judy Sedgeman



Since it was first written in 1952, the 'bible of mental disorders' — the nattily-titled *Diagnostic & Statistical Manual (or DSM)* — has grown in size. Considerably. The first edition described just over a hundred conditions (which already seems like a lot, to me), while the *DSM-5*, from 2022, contains 298.

What are we to make of this miserable tripling? Are we all becoming more mentally unwell? Have we made such strides in our understanding of the human mind, that this ballooning of the figures represents pioneering advancements in the field of science?

No, and no.

Let's be perfectly clear: diagnoses have been made up by human minds. They don't exist in nature. This isn't to say that people don't experience distressing symptoms, and don't need help; nor is it to deny that, regrettably, we live in a society where *getting* that help often depends on being *given* a diagnosis.

No, we're just looking at the human condition here, which consists of us moving through life's circumstances, moment by moment, and the mind creating a picture of what those circumstances are, and what they mean.

Each moment's picture that's created by the mind has a feeling to it, a bit like the scenes of a film. Sometimes they're funny, sometimes they're sad and sometimes they're really scary.

Now, none of this is remotely a problem when we maintain perspective and stay in touch with the fact that our feelings are just a reflection of the pictures being created; a drama, being played out on the screen of our minds.

From this standpoint, resting in our true nature, we're watching the drama unfold, rather than being in it.

But when we *lose* that perspective and start believing the pictures and the mind's stories to be true, we assume the starring role and completely forget it's all just a passing show. We analyse, ruminate, create meaning, scare ourselves and innocently think ourselves further and further away from our true nature.

Understandably, at some point, deep inside this drama that looks so, so real, the mind pipes up to suggest that maybe there's something fundamentally wrong with us. And if we believe *that* thought too, we might seek help from a professional. They agree, consult their DSM, choose the closest label for our particular human experience, and hey presto, we have ourselves a diagnosis.

Now, diagnoses aren't *wrong* in and of themselves. They're just descriptions of groups of symptoms, that other people have experienced too. If you've been muddling along all alone for ages, and an authority figure tells you *No, these are common feelings* – look, we've given them a *name!* then just knowing that might, in itself, bring great relief.

Indeed, if a diagnosis helps you to stop thinking about yourself and the problems that the mind creates, then hurrah! Things will improve, and as you become less and less bothered by your insecurities, you may even come to the realisation that you never did 'have' a diagnosis in the first place; that you, like everyone, are perfectly whole already.

But when you *identify* with the transient cluster of thoughts and feelings the doctors have called a 'diagnosis', that's when it becomes a trap: a real, solid thing, that it looks like you're stuck with for life.

For years I believed there was something fundamentally wrong with me because I never could seem to find my place in this world, and I never stuck at things. During my deepest moments of introspection on this particular drama, I'd probably have qualified for a diagnosis.

But then someone taught me all about the nature of thought and I had the insight that, *Oh, there's nothing wrong with me! We just all feel like this from time to time.* And that particular drama — along with many others — just went away.

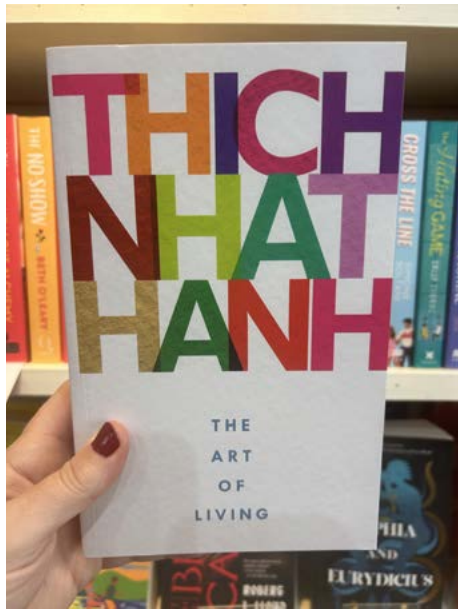
At the very root of *all* diagnoses, there's only really *one* mental 'disorder', and that's our innocent misuse of thought, against ourselves. So why not fully embrace your diagnostic label of 'being human', stop taking your thinking so seriously and go live the beautiful life that's been waiting for you, all along.

I'm hopeful that we'll get there as a species, eventually. Who knows, the DSM-10 might have just the one entry?

Dr Giles P Croft gilescroft.com
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If you'd like to start your day with a quick, light-hearted reminder of how your mind works and how being human is ok, then sign up to my FREE Daily Reminders newsletter here: <https://gilescroft.com/newsletter>

Book Recommendations

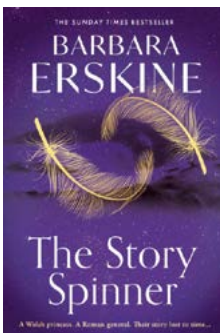
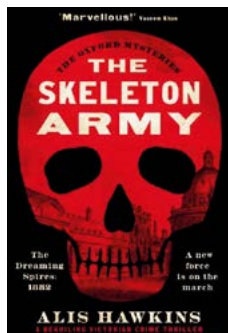


This month's recommendations from the Book-ish Booksellers guides us towards achieving balance in our everyday lives

The Art of Living Thich Nhat Hanh

£13.99

Nobel Peace Prize nominee, internationally renowned Zen master and bestselling author Thich Nhat Hanh shares his mindful techniques in mastering the art of living. Stimulating and inspiring, this book teaches us the importance of looking inside ourselves and developing compassion, before we can turn to our relationships at home and in the wider world. Full of remarkable stories from Thich Nhat Hanh's own experiences and mindful practices for engaging with life, this will be a book that will help us generate happiness, understanding and love so we can live deeply in each moment of our life, right where we are.



{BOOK•ISH}

BOOKS, CONVERSATION & MORE

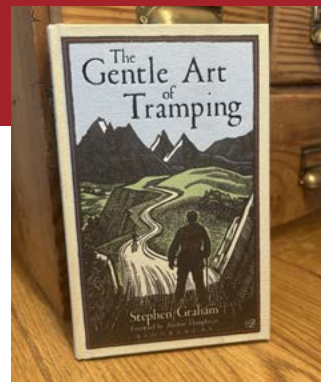
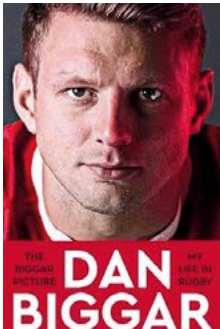
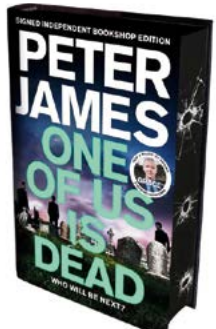
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BOOK-ISH LOFT, CRICKHOWELL
TICKET £12 | WITH BOOK £20

BARBARA ERSKINE - 5TH SEPT - 2PM
THE MANOR HOTEL, CRICKHOWELL
TICKET £15* | WITH BOOK £30*

PETER JAMES - 19TH SEPT - 7.30PM
BOROUGH THEATRE, ABERGAVENNY
TICKET £16 | WITH BOOK £30

DAN BIGGAR - 23RD SEPT - 7.30PM
BLAENAVON WORKMEN'S HALL
TICKET £25 WITH SIGNED BOOK

*TICKETS INCLUDE A CREAM TEA
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The Gentle Art of Tramping Stephen Graham

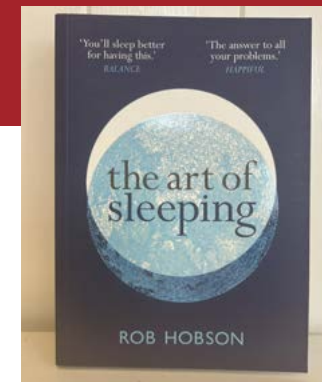
£12.99

Know how to tramp and you know how to live... Know how to meet your fellow-wanderer, how to be passive to the beauty of nature and how to be active to its wildness and its rigour. Originally published in 1926, The Gentle Art of Tramping is a guide for anyone who has dreamed of taking to the road with nothing more than a bag full of essentials and big ideas. It gives guidance on walking, being open to discovery and being kind - advice as relevant now as it was then.

Enchantment: Reawakening Wonder in an Exhausted Age Katherine May

£9.99

Feeling bone-tired, anxious and overwhelmed by the rolling news cycle and the pandemic age, Katherine May seeks to unravel the threads of a life wound too tightly. Could there be another way to live - one that feels more meaningful, more grounded in the places beneath our feet? One that would allow



The Art of Sleeping Rob Hobson

£8.99

We're bombarded with confusing and contradictory advice about achieving a better night's sleep. So, what's the secret? The Art of Sleeping combines the latest scientific research, expert advice, and Rob's own tricks and tips about dealing with insomnia to create a concise, practical, and engaging handbook on achieving better sleep. By exploring the three key pillars of sleep: behaviour, environment, and diet (BED), readers will find themselves equipped with techniques to aid sleep and relaxation, and to live a happier, calmer, and more successful life.



us to feel more connected, more rested and at ease, even as seismic changes unfold on the planet? Craving a different path, May explores the restorative properties of the natural world and begins to rekindle her sense of wonder. It is a journey that takes her from sacred wells to wild moors, from cradling seas to starfalls. Through deliberate attention and ritual, she finds nourishment and a more hopeful relationship to the world around her.

Time Runs Like a River

Emma Carlisle
£12.99

Rivers can be fast-flowing or still, raging or calm, just like us. This lyrical picture book from the award-winning artist Emma Carlisle explores the concepts of time and change through the ebb and flow of a river. From the fleeting flash of a kingfisher to slow grinding of pebbles, this beautiful book encourages readers to notice the big and small things happening in nature, as well as reflecting on things which have come and gone, and those yet to be enjoyed. With themes of mindfulness and nature, the book also includes non-fiction spreads at the back of the book which can be shared with children.



The Science of Happiness

Professor Bruce Hood
£22

In The Science of Happiness, world-leading psychologist and happiness expert Bruce Hood demonstrates that the key to happiness is not self-care but connection. He presents seven simple but life-changing lessons to break negative thought patterns and re-connect with the things that really matter. Grounded in decades of studies in neuroscience and developmental psychology, this book tells a radical new story about the roots of wellbeing and the obstacles that lie in our path. With clear, practical takeaways throughout, Professor Hood demonstrates how we can all harness the findings of this science to re-wire our thinking and transform our lives.



Asian Broth

This broth contains quite a few ingredients, but many are optional and it is a great way to use up different vegetables that might be hanging around in the vegetable drawer in your fridge.

We have listed the core ingredients that make up the basis of the broth itself. There are quite a few of these, but once you have bought them, they last for ages, and will enable you to rustle up something healthy and delicious in minutes. The broth makes a wonderfully tasty dish and is a perfect balance between healthy, delicious and nutritious

Serves 2

Core Ingredients

- 1 tsp vegetable oil
- ½ bunch spring onions – sliced
- Thumb sized piece of ginger – peeled and finely chopped
- ½ medium red chilli – deseeded and finely chopped
- Handful fresh coriander
- 2 tbsp dark soy sauce
- 1 tbsp fish sauce
- 1 tsp miso paste
- 1 tsp runny honey
- 1 chicken OR vegetable stock cube

Optional Ingredients

- Chop all veg into bit sized pieces
- Handful shitake mushrooms

- Handful broccoli florets
- Handful mangetout/sugar snap peas
- 1 nest rice/egg noodles
- 2 small pak choi/a few shredded cabbage leaves
- Drizzle sesame oil

1 To begin, heat the vegetable oil in a decent sized saucepan on a medium heat

2 Add the chopped ginger, garlic and chilli and fry these off for around 3-4 minutes

3 Add 1.2 litres of water to the pan, along with the crumbled stock cube and allow to come to the boil

4 Next add a generous teaspoon of miso paste, together with the soy sauce, fish sauce and honey, and give it a good stir to combine. Turn the heat down slightly

5 If you are using mushrooms, add them at this stage, and cook for 5 minutes. They will impart a beautifully deep flavour to the broth

6 Next add any hard vegetables that you might be using, such as the broccoli florets, along with the

noodles. Allow to cook for a further three minutes

7 Add the remaining vegetables, allow the broth to come back to the boil and then immediately remove from the heat

8 Serve in bowls and finish with a scattering of fresh coriander leaves and a drizzle of sesame oil

**The amount of time you choose to cook the vegetables in the broth is down to your personal taste. The above method cooks the vegetables through, leaving a little bite, but you can adjust this according to your own preference.



PUZZLES SPOT THE DIFFERENCE



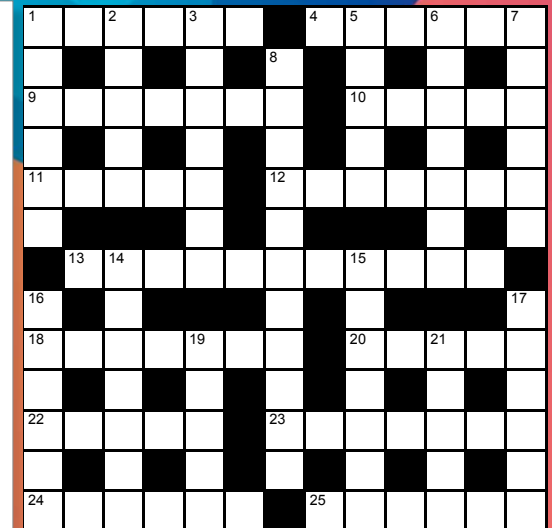
Quick Crossword

ACROSS

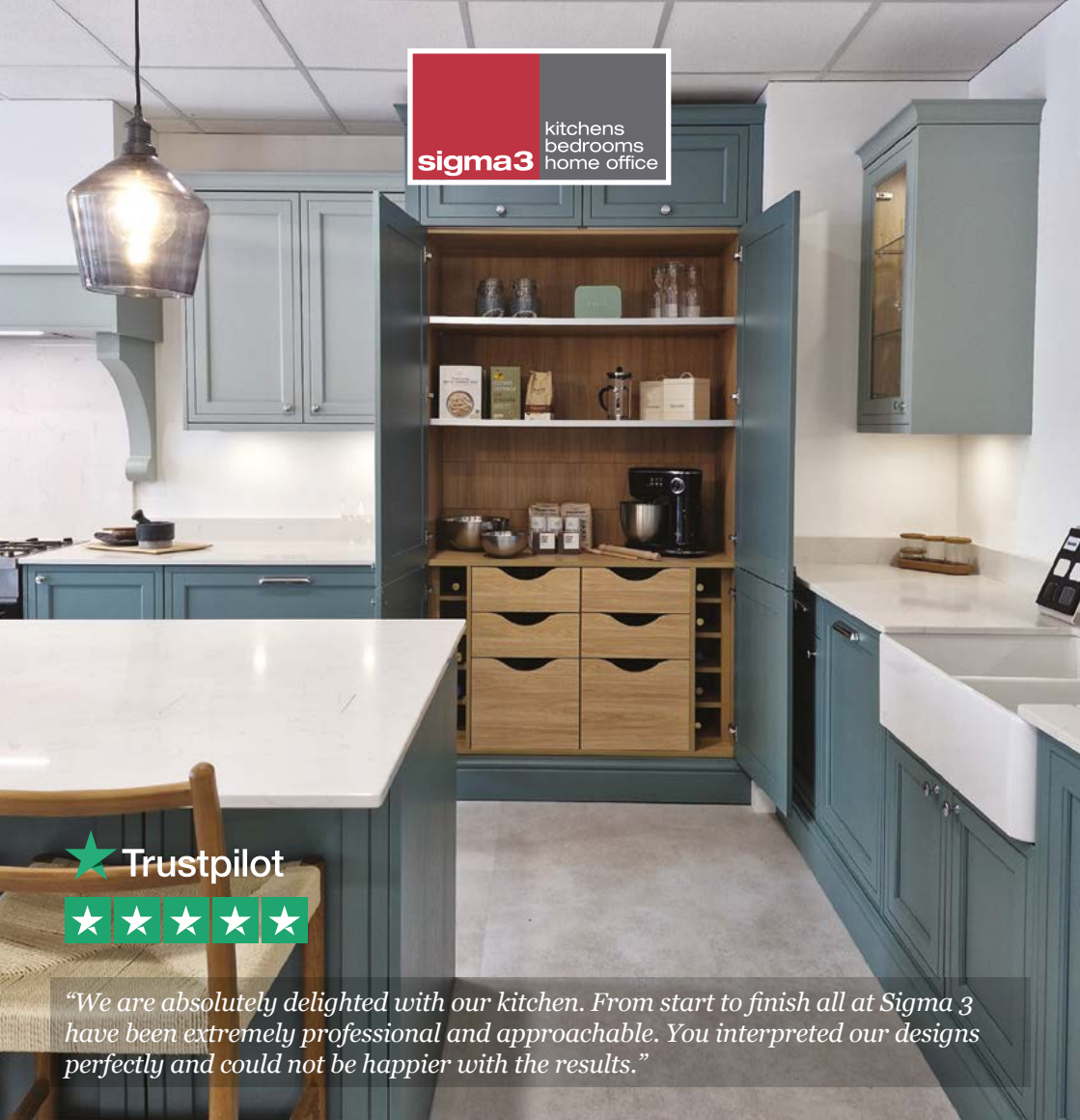
- 1 Deprive of food (6)
- 4 Scribble (6)
- 9 Complicated (7)
- 10 Meal of raw vegetables (5)
- 11 Additional (5)
- 12 Exactly alike (7)
- 13 Meeting (11)
- 18 Down-payment (7)
- 20 End of day (5)
- 22 Type of oil (5)
- 23 Result (7)
- 24 Process (6)
- 25 Holds firmly (6)

DOWN

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



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