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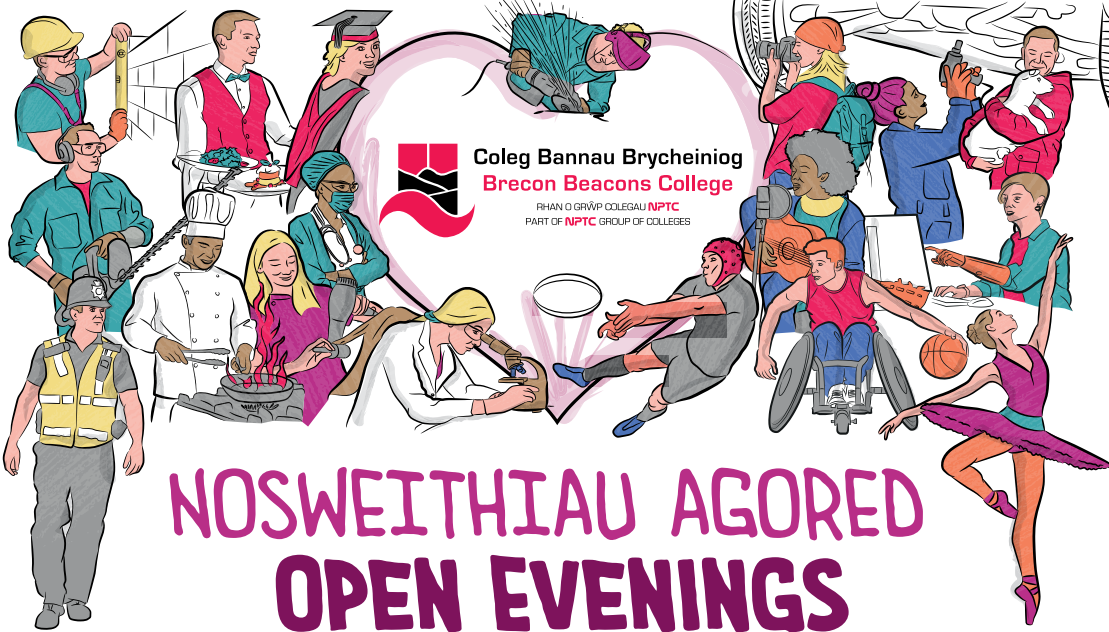
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Dear Readers,



I have always found immense joy in being creative. For me, it is more than simply a pastime; it is an essential outlet; a quiet, grounding space away from the pace of work and the constant demands of everyday life. It is a way to pause, to reflect and to express thoughts and ideas that might otherwise be lost in the noise.

My own passions lie in journaling and in creative writing. Both allow for freedom of expression in very different ways. Yet creativity means something unique to each of us. It might be painting, pottery, music, gardening, cooking, photography, or crafting something entirely by hand. However it takes shape, the act of creating brings with it a sense of purpose and connection that feels increasingly valuable in today's fast-moving, technology-driven world.

We are fortunate to live in an area where arts and crafts are not only appreciated but truly abundant. There is a vibrant creative spirit here; one that thrives in studios, workshops, community spaces and homes alike. It enriches our local culture and reminds us of the importance of making time for imagination and self-expression.

In this month's issue, we celebrate creativity in all its forms. Whether you are already immersed in your own creative pursuits or simply curious to explore something new, I hope you will discover something that resonates.

As always, thank you for reading and I very much hope you enjoy this month's edition.

Hannah & Pete

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2026 Running Challenge



Throughout 2026, James is pushing his physical and mental limits by completing a half marathon event every single month to raise vital funds for charity.

After kicking off with a solo run in January, James has adapted his February miles into two 10K events to accommodate competing in the UK National Taekwondo Championships. With the Forest of Dean and Newport Half Marathons fast approaching, the momentum is building.

"Running has had a hugely positive impact on my own mental health," James explains. "Last year my fundraising was centred on mental health and wellbeing, but my experience running the Cardiff Half Marathon for Alcohol Change UK last year was a turning point. I was overwhelmed by the support and the deeply personal stories shared by those in our community. I firmly believe that mental health, physical wellbeing, and addiction are all interlinked and you cannot address one without the others.

Alcohol harm impacts families across our country every single day, often silently exacerbating mental health struggles. By taking on this 12-month challenge, I want to highlight these links and encourage others to see the benefits of staying active and talking openly about wellbeing."

Businesses are already rallying behind the cause. HB Foot Care, Martial Arts Fitness Centre-Newport, Altra Running and Strive Insoles have provided invaluable support, but as James is self-funding the endeavour, further help is needed. Support with race entry costs, supplements or running kit (socks, caps, shorts) would make a significant difference in keeping James on the road for a great cause.

Donate Online: www.justgiving.com/page/jbowen2026

Donate Locally: Cash donations can be made at the official collection point at HB Foot Care, 5 Cibi Walk, Abergavenny.

Whether it's a donation, a kit sponsorship or a simple cheer every bit of encouragement helps promote a healthier, more active local community.

James Bowen



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Bailey Park



Bowls Club

Looking for a gentle summer activity to improve your physical and mental wellbeing? Then try a game of bowls at Bailey Park Bowls Club.

We are a welcoming and inclusive club that caters for all ages, genders and abilities, and we are on the lookout for new members of any ability. Beginners are especially welcome with woods and guidance readily provided.

This season we will be playing six 3 rink matches on Wednesday evenings, alongside our regular practice sessions from 5pm on Wednesday evenings.

For the more competitive, we play in Division 1 of the Gwent Bowls League on Saturday afternoons from May to September.

The club has achieved considerable recent success by winning this

league in 2022, as joint leaders in 2023, in 2nd place in 2024, and winning the league again in 2025.

Should anyone be interested in joining the club to play or just watch, please feel free to approach any member present on the green at any time, Or contact the following - Club Chairman Tel **07599 688973** or Club Treasurer Tel **07498 341804**

The club continues to exist due the generosity of Abergavenny Rotary Club and the financial support of local businesses who have advertised on the green railings and for this , the club is extremely grateful.

Green is open from 1st April 2026
OPEN DAYS - 18TH AND 25TH APRIL 2026

All are welcome to try a roll up and be amazed at how easy it can be !!! Meet the members, chat and perhaps enjoy a cuppa.

*Robert Siddons,
Hon Treasurer of Bailey Park Bowls Club*



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Abergavenny to Bid for 'Town of Culture'



Abergavenny has expressed interest in bidding for the UK's Town of Culture 2028, showcasing its rich heritage, creativity and strong community spirit.

From Abergavenny Castle to its independent shops, market and setting on the edge of Bannau Brycheiniog National Park, the town blends history, culture and natural beauty.

Events such as the Abergavenny Food Festival highlight its national cultural profile.

The bid aims to support local creatives, engage young people and boost sustainable tourism.

Residents and organisations are **invited to share ideas and plans for 2028** to help shape a bid that celebrates Abergavenny's unique identity and community pride.

Tourism and Heritage Cluster Agreement

Abergavenny and Blaenavon have announced a new three-year Tourism and Heritage Cluster Agreement, uniting their communities to celebrate their distinct identities, shared history and stunning landscapes while welcoming visitors from across the UK and beyond. In Abergavenny, highlights include Abergavenny Castle Museum and the surrounding Abergavenny Three Peaks, while Blaenavon is home to the Blaenavon Industrial Landscape, featuring Blaenavon Ironworks, Big Pit National Coal Museum and the Pontypool and Blaenavon Railway.

Connected by dramatic scenery, the area offers outdoor adventure from Keeper's Pond and the Garn Lakes to Blorenge and Castle Meadows, attracting walkers, cyclists and visitors from near and far. Together, the two towns are championing their heritage, culture and community spirit to build a vibrant, collaborative future.



Scan the QR code below to fill out our town of culture bid survey and let us know your thoughts.



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Celebrating Creativity at Dance Blast



Dance Blast's three dynamic performance companies; MYCC, MCDC and MYDC have been busy this term creating new pieces that will be showcased before Easter. Their hard work and passion is a testament to the power of creativity and collaboration within our community.

THE WAY THE CROW FLIES
Sunday March 8th 3:30pm & 5:30pm
Dance Blast, Abergavenny

MYCC: Monmouthshire Youth Circus Company



This contemporary circus performance is a modern folk story that intertwines themes of dressmaking

and resilience. It is part of an exhibition of **Women's Narratives**,

in celebration of International Women's Day 2026. MYCC's performance piece has been inspired by Kirstie Macloed's Red Dress and stories of resilience from the **threads** community arts group's 'Resilience' exhibition displayed at Theatr Brycheiniog in Sept 2025.

The Women's Narrative Exhibition, taking place from 2pm to 6pm, will feature the Community Shawl Project documentary and exhibits by Emma Bevan Henderson and Carol Kay. Visitors can also participate in a community quilt textile workshop led by Emma Bevan Henderson.

DOUBLE BILL
Wednesday 1st & Thursday 2nd April, 7pm
Dance Blast Abergavenny

MCDC: Monmouthshire Connected Dance Company
MCDC, our inclusive adult dance company, is collaborating with

Ballet Cymru this term. Together they are creating a reimagined version of the timeless classic, **Sleeping Beauty**, with Louise Lloyd from Ballet Cymru leading the sessions, and the choreography being a joint effort between her and the dancers.

MYDC: Monmouthshire Youth Dance Company

MYDC is taking creativity to a new level with their collaboration with young musicians from Abergavenny. Under the direction of Beat Technique's Dean Yhnell, these young musicians are creating an original score for MYDC's latest choreography, **COULD AI?** This innovative piece is directed by two MYDC members with guidance from Dance Artist Alex Marshall Parsons, showcasing the fresh perspectives and creative leadership of the young people of Abergavenny.

Visit www.dance-blast.org for more information about Dance Blast.



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Abergavenny Bowls Club

Did you know that Abergavenny is the home of the Oldest Lawn Bowls Club in Wales? It was founded in 1860 at The Great Western Hotel, but we are now situated on Avenue Road next to the Cricket Ground.

We are busy getting ready to open the Green on April 11th for our 166th season. Following on from last years extremely successful Taster Sessions we will be holding them again this year to find some more potential Champions.

If you would like to come along to our Taster Sessions on April 24th, May 1st & May 8th starting at 5:30pm we will do our best to show you what a great game it is and you will have an opportunity to become a member if you wish.

Lawn Bowls is fast becoming a sport for ALL AGES and at Abergavenny Bowls Club we are keen to show that it is.

Bowls isn't just about gently rolling a ball (we promise!), it's a game of skill, strategy and nerve. Every end is different, every shot matters, and there's always a chance to turn the game around with one great bowl.

It's easy to learn but challenging to master - which makes it seriously addictive. It's also a brilliant way to try a new sport in a friendly, pressure free environment, improve focus, coordination and tactical thinking.

Compete individually or as part of a team, meet new people and make friends with players from all over Monmouthshire and beyond.

No experience? No problem, you don't need to have played before - or even watched a game. Our

qualified coaches will teach you every thing from the basics to match play - all at your own pace. All equipment is provided (apart from flat soled shoes) so you just need to turn up with a sense of humour and have a go, it's more than just a sport - it turns into a way of life.

At Abergavenny Bowls Club it's about having fun as much as competition. You'll be part of a welcoming club that values encouragement, teamwork and having a laugh along the way. So whether you want to play in one of our teams, which we sincerely hope that you will, or play socially or in competitions there is a place here for you.

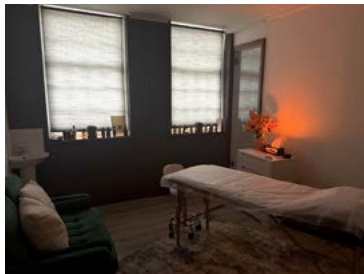
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Get Growing for a Great Cause

the 2026 Potato Growing Challenge returns



Last year's Adult Class winners, Gilwern couple Chris and Bob Straughan (far left and far right), turned the Potato Growing Challenge into a fun family affair, with four generations competing for prizes.

The much-loved annual Potato Growing Challenge is back for 2026, inviting people of all ages to roll up their sleeves, have a bit of fun, and grow their way to glory – all while supporting a vital local heart charity.

Run by the North Gwent Cardiac Rehabilitation & Aftercare Charity, the annual challenge, now in its fifth year, raises funds to support long-term cardiac rehabilitation exercise classes for people living with heart conditions across the North Gwent region.

This year, the charity is especially keen to involve local schools and community groups, encouraging even more people to get growing together.

Entry costs £5 and includes the competition kit – 1 x10 litre pot and 1 x Charlotte seed potato.

“It’s a simple, friendly way to get involved in gardening, whether you’re a seasoned grower or trying it for the first time,” says Charity Chair Jacky Miles, MBE, “And we’re delighted that the fabulous team at the Abergavenny Garden Centre will be sponsoring the challenge once again.”

WHERE TO GET YOUR KIT

Kits go on sale in March at the following locations:

Saturday 7 March, 12pm-4pm
Treebeards Bar, High Street, Crickhowell

14-15 March and 21-22 March, 10am-4pm
Abergavenny Garden Centre, Llanfoist

WHO CAN ENTER

The competition is open to everyone, with two classes:

- Children (up to age 16)
- Adults (16 and over)

Schools, youth groups, gardening clubs, allotments and other community organisations are warmly encouraged to take part and grow alongside the wider community.

HOW THE CHALLENGE WORKS

Growers will have four months to nurture their potato plants before bringing their pots to the Abergavenny Garden Centre for the official “Grand Reveal” and weigh in on Saturday 11 July, from 2pm-4pm.

The winners will be the growers of the top two heaviest recorded harvests in each class, with garden centre vouchers awarded as prizes:

Children

1st prize: £10 voucher
2nd prize: £5 voucher

Adults

1st prize: £20 voucher
2nd prize: £15 voucher

GROWING FOR GOOD

Proceeds from entry fees will help fund the work of the North Gwent Cardiac Rehabilitation & Aftercare Charity, which provides specialised long-term exercise classes and support for people living with heart conditions. By taking part, you’ll be helping the charity continue its life-changing work in communities across North Gwent.

For more info about the charity, including class details and a self-referral form, go to cardiac-rehab.org.uk

POTATO GROWING CHALLENGE

All ages welcome!

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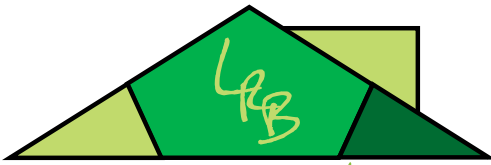
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WHAT'S ON

6TH MARCH

TIM WEAVER – THE LOST WOMEN

7:30pm, Book-ish Loft, Crickhowell
www.book-ish.co.uk/events for tickets
and info

7TH MARCH

QUIZ NIGHT

Test your knowledge and help support Abergavenny Pridel Teams of up to 6 players and a prize for the winning team 7pm, Portico Lounge, Abergavenny. £2 per person

9TH MARCH

GREENER ABERGAVENNY OPEN MEETING

Join Greener Abergavenny at their regular 6 weekly meeting to find out about green activities and groups in and around town. All are very welcome. 7pm-8.30pm, Abergavenny Wellbeing Hub (opposite Aldi), Abergavenny bus station car park.

7TH-15TH MARCH

CRICKHOWELL WALKING FESTIVAL

Visit www.crickhowellfestival.com

7TH MARCH

LEARN TO KNIT SOCKS COURSE START

Runs weekly for 3 weeks– attend all. £89 incl 100g sock yarn.
1:30pm with Anja, The Wool Croft, Nevill St, Abergavenny info@thewoolcroft.co.uk or call 0739 777 9931
See Page 47

8TH MARCH

MENOPAUSE CAFÉ

Join us for friendly conversation and connection - open to all, with no judgment and no agenda. Free to attend – just purchase your own drinks and snacks. For more info leilamevans1@outlook.com 6pm-8pm, Angel Hotel, Abergavenny (located in the lounge ahead of the foyer area)

8TH MARCH

THE WAY THE CROW FLIES

Monmouthshire Youth Circus Company circus performance 3:30pm & 5:30pm, Dance Blast, Abergavenny

See Page 13 for more info

11TH MARCH

GOVILON WI

'Tracing Family History' – Gill Garrett Salisbury Community Hall, Merthyr Road, Govilon. 7:15pm, visitors £3 to include refreshments

11TH MARCH

ABERGAVENNY LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY TALK

7.30pm, Borough Theatre, Abergavenny

See Article Page 59 for info

12TH MARCH

Book-ish Event MAYA JORDAN – CHOPSY

7pm, Book-ish, Abergavenny
Book-ish.co.uk/events for info & bookings

14TH MARCH & 21ST MARCH

CEREAL SKETCHERS KIDS' CLUB

10:30-11:30am, Pawb Arts, First Floor 18 Nevill St, Abergavenny
£8 per session

16TH MARCH

GREENER ABERGAVENNY OPEN MEETING

7pm, Abergavenny Wellbeing Hub, Abergavenny Bus Station Car Park

16TH MARCH

GAVENNY GARDENING CLUB

The subject for our March 16th meeting will be **The Impatient Gardener**. Roger Lloyd of Highfield Farm will tell us how he developed the garden, which is often open to the public. 7pm-9pm, Llantilio Pertholey Community Hall, St David's Rd, Mardy, NP7 6HF

17TH MARCH

ART IN THE YURT

Watercolour Floral Bee with Helen Absalom Art 10am-12pm, The Retreat, Llanover, NP7 9EN

To book please contact Helen Absalom Art on 07785951974 or email helengarlick@yahoo.co.uk

18TH MARCH

Abergavenny Film Society Screening ICHIKO

A Japanese psychological thriller film. Kawabe happily accepts when her boyfriend asks her to marry him but the next day she vanishes without trace. She is driven to shroud her identity, caught in a web of secrecy. As she conceals herself, the intricate layers of her hidden life unfold. A powerful exploration of many important social issues including poverty, abuse and the shortcomings of the Japanese family registration system. Two Screenings: 4:30pm & 7:30pm, Melville Theatre, Abergavenny, £5 entry.

See advert Page 22 for more info

18TH MARCH

BRECON BEACONS COLLEGE OPEN EVENING

4:30pm-7pm

See advert on Page 4 for full info

21ST MARCH

SPRING LANDSCAPE IN WATERCOLOUR FOR BEGINNERS

£22 per person. All material provided. To book please contact Helen Absalom Art on 07785951974 or email helengarlick@yahoo.co.uk 10:30am-12:30pm, Cross Ash Village Hall

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Ichiko
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**1st April
Two to One
(12A)**

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21ST MARCH

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11am-2pm, last booking at 1:15pm.

Book, enquire or drop in. Contact

repaircafeabergavenny@gmail.com

and Facebook messenger

Abergavenny Community Centre,

Merthyr Rd, Abergavenny

21ST MARCH

Book-ish Author Booksigning

ROGER WHITMORE – SEIKYRE.

LEGACY OF THE BROKEN RUNE

STAFF

1pm, Book-ish, Abergavenny

24TH MARCH

Book-ish Event

ZAKIA SEWELL –

FINDING ALBION

7:30pm, Book-ish Loft, Crickhowell

Book-ish.co.uk/events for info &

bookings

26TH MARCH

STREET FOOD & CRAFT

NIGHT MARKET

5pm-9pm, Market Hall and Brewery

Yard, Abergavenny

26TH MARCH

PAINT NIGHT

Spring Hare in acrylics with Helen Absalom Art. £30 per person. Suitable for beginners. All material provided.

To book please contact Helen on

07785951974 or email [helengarlick@](mailto:helengarlick@yahoo.co.uk)

[yahoo.co.uk](mailto:helengarlick@yahoo.co.uk) 7pm - 9:30pm, Portico

Lounge Abergavenny

27TH MARCH

ABERGAVENTNY U3A

All members are invited to attend the AGM for appointment of our Committee, the Chairs and Financial reports. A lunch and social to follow. Please look out for your official notice of the meeting and agenda.

12:30pm-2:30pm, Pen-y-Pound football clubhouse, Abergavenny

30TH MARCH

STITCHED HILLSIDES – EMBROIDERED CLOTH PANEL

10am-12:30pm with Jemima Lumley £55 to include all material and refreshments (book whole day for discount £99). Wool Croft, Nevill St, Abergavenny. info@thewoolcroft.co.uk or call 0739 777 9931

See Page 47

30TH MARCH

SLOW STITCH A SCRAPS RIBBON ON A VINTAGE COTTON REEL

1:30pm-4pm with Jemima Lumley £55 to include all material and refreshments (book whole day for discount £99. Wool Croft, Nevill St, Abergavenny. info@thewoolcroft.co.uk or call 0739 777 9931

See Page 47

30TH MARCH

NEW PUPPY COURSE START

With Canine Connections 7pm-7:45pm, Trinity Hall, Abergavenny

See Advert Page 51 for details

1ST APRIL

Abergavenny Film Society Screening

TWO TO ONE

A comedy based in East Germany in 1990 when the reunification of East and West Germany is looming. East German citizens have only six days to exchange their Ostmarks for West German marks and childhood friends decide to steal a fortune in nearly worthless money from an underground bunker. The characters involved lightheartedly reveal the clash between capitalist greed and socialism.

Two Screenings: 4:30pm & 7:30pm, Melville Theatre, Abergavenny, £5 entry.

See advert Page 22 for more info

1ST & 2ND APRIL

Monmouthshire Connected Dance

Company: SLEEPING BEAUTY

7pm, Dance Blast Abergavenny

See Page 13 for more info

12TH APRIL

ABERGAVENTNY CRAFT MARKET

10am-4pm, Abergavenny Market Hall

17TH-19TH APRIL

EMBRACING WHOLENESS

A three day women's retreat for rest and restoration. Organised by Body & Earth Somatic Wellbeing

See advert on Page 3 for more info

18TH & 25TH APRIL

BAILEY PARK BOWLS CLUB

OPEN DAY

See Page 9 for more info

LOOKING AHEAD

1ST-4TH MAY

CRICKHOWELL MUSIC FESTIVAL

This year will see Crickhowell's 30th Music Festival, opening with Friday's Folk Night and the Kosmos Ensemble, a trio of dazzling virtuosity and impeccable musicianship. On Saturday and Sunday the Choral Society and a star line-up of soloists will perform music by Purcell, Bach, Whitacre and Mozart's revered Requiem Mass as well as hidden treasures from Caldara, Zelenka and Mondonville. Monday's finale brings together some of our much loved former and present music scholars in this, the 10th Anniversary of our Choral Scholars programme promoting young musicianship in the area.

For tickets and more information go to www.crickhowellchoralsociety.org

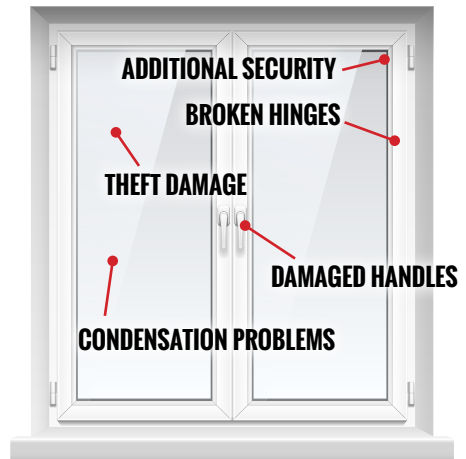
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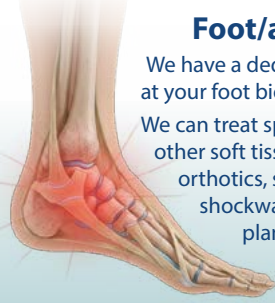


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WEEKLY EVENTS

MONDAYS

WATERCOLOURS WITH HELEN ABSALOM ART

10:30-12:30pm

16th- Daffodils, 23rd – Butterfly, 30th – Swallows Return, 6th April – Coffee & Croissants. £22 per class, £80 for all 4. Helen Absalom Art on 07785951974 or email helengarlick@yahoo.co.uk

Digbys Café, Abergavenny Garden Centre

ANDYS MAN CLUB

7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Free peer to peer mens group. Aimed at ending the stigma surrounding men's mental health, through the power of conversation in a safe and non judgemental space.

andysmanclub.co.uk

Tithe Barn, Monk Street, Abergavenny

PARKINSONS SUPPORT GROUP

11:00 am -12:30 pm

Tithe Barn, Monk St, Abergavenny

TUESDAYS

GENERAL MARKET

9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Abergavenny Market Hall

CRAFTING FOR CANCER

10:30 am -12:30 pm

Weekly crafting and support group. All welcome. Free to participate. Materials provided or bring your own

Tithe Barn, Abergavenny

WEDNESDAYS

FLEA MARKET

9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Browse the stalls for unique antiques, marvellous curios, repurposed and upcycled furniture, bric a brac and lots more!

Abergavenny Market Hall

FREE WEEKLY EXERCISE PROGRAMME FOR OVER 50S

9:30 am -10:30 am

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Gateway Church Abergavenny, Monk Street, Abergavenny NP7 5ND

COFFEE MORNING

10:30 am - 12:30 pm

Come join us for our Community Wellbeing Café Coffee Morning

Tithe Barn, Monk St, Abergavenny

SEE YOU FOR LUNCH

12:30 pm - 1:30 pm

Abergavenny Community Centre

CRAFTERNOON

1:00 pm - 3:00 pm

Free Crafting afternoons, includes free hot drink.

The Wool Croft, Nevill St, Abergavenny

THURSDAYS

WATERCOLOURS WITH HELEN ABSALOM ART

10:30-12:30pm

March 19th- Daffodils

26th – Butterfly

2nd April – Swallows Return

9th April – Coffee & Croissants

£22 per class, £80 for all 4

Helen Absalom Art on 07785951974 or email helengarlick@yahoo.co.uk

Llanellen Village Hall

LIFE MUSIC (Fortnightly)

2:00 pm

No need to book, instruments provided, no experience needed. Open to all & free of charge!

Tithe Barn, Monk St, Abergavenny

FRIDAYS

LIGHT LUNCH

12:00 pm

Abergavenny Community Centre

GENERAL MARKET

9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Abergavenny Market Hall

SOCIAL PAINTING GROUP

1:30pm-3:30pm

Free, All welcome. Materials provided or bring your own

Tithe Barn, Monk St, Abergavenny

SATURDAYS

PARKRUN

9:00 am (meet from 8:50am)

Free 5k run/jog/walk. For more

details go to www.parkrun.org.uk/llanfoistcrossing

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GENERAL MARKET

9:00 am - 4:00 pm

Abergavenny Market Hall

BENTHYG ABERGAVENNY

11:00 am - 1:00 pm

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CEREAL SKETCHERS KIDS' CLUB

10:30-11:30am

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SUNDAYS

SUNDAY AFTERNOON TEA

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3:00 pm

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March Weather Outlook

by Jonathan Powell

With a fair proportion of February delivering wet weather across the region, begging the question as to when it would actually stop raining, the final stages of the month did see that stranglehold loosen. March is unlikely to see that grip tighten again with perhaps a more balanced month ahead. Therefore, expect more of an even mix of rain and drier, brighter spells of weather, although whilst there doesn't look to be any sustained and lengthy periods of rainfall, what does arrive, could at times be on the heavy side. Temperatures will be quite varied but there appears to be an overall lean toward milder conditions, with only a minimal threat of frost activity, and even if we do have a frost, it looks neither sharp or severe. April may well shift affairs further toward being drier overall than wetter. The amount of rain during any episode, (albeit shorter in duration), will accumulate to reflect a wetter than average month, with temperatures on or above the average.



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The Garden Kitchen by Pugh's

Surprisingly good food, but some kinks to iron out



The talk of the town is the newly opened The Garden Kitchen by Pugh's, located at 7-9 Mill Street in Abergavenny (formerly Timothy Oulton), which opened on 29th January. Billed as offering "sumptuous home-cooked meals", we were keen to try it ourselves.

We visited on a busy Wednesday lunchtime during its first week. Parking may be an ongoing issue, with cars on double yellow lines outside; we used the nearby bus station car park.

Our first impression was how cold the downstairs dining area felt. It adjoins an impressive, well-stocked deli/food hall and garden-centre-style gift shop. I can't comment on the upstairs space, but downstairs many diners kept coats on. The décor is pleasant and practical, with thoughtful touches and comfortable chairs, though the layout can be awkward for buggies, disrupting the flow. The ambience sits between café and bistro, polished yet casual.

There was a short wait for a table, while staff worked hard clearing and resetting tables. Separate breakfast and lunch menus are offered, with small plates, larger dishes and sides. I'd have welcomed a lighter option

such as soup or a Buddha bowl, as much of the menu leans towards heavier or fried dishes, though this may change seasonally. Ordering is at the table or via a QR code app.

I chose tempura vegetables with dashi broth and pickled ginger (ABOVE); my partner ordered the Korean chicken grilled cheese with pulled chicken, Korean BBQ sauce, Gruyère, pickled red onion and sriracha mayo. We shared truffle tots with bacon jam, aioli and truffle cheese, and duck-loaded fries with confit duck, spring onions, hoisin crispy shallots and kewpie mayo.



Food arrived after around 25 minutes; a little long, but understandable for a new opening. Portions were generous, and we couldn't finish everything. The tempura had a light, crisp batter, but the promised dashi broth, pickled ginger and seaweed salt were missing, replaced by a sticky teriyaki style sauce (still tasty).

The truffle tots looked fantastic with strong street-food appeal; although the truffle flavour was subtle, they were crisp and indulgent. The Korean chicken grilled cheese sandwich was excellent; crispy, generously filled and a real crowd-pleaser. The duck-loaded fries disappointed; despite good fries and portion size, there was very little duck and too much unrendered skin, not worthy of the 'loaded' label.

Overall, The Garden Kitchen by Pugh's is an enjoyable lunch spot with clear potential. Early teething problems will likely be resolved by the hardworking, friendly staff, but dishes should match menu descriptions, quality control needs attention, (and the heating should be turned up).



GO FOR:

A casual, generously portioned lunch with friends

STAY FOR:

The comprehensive, cleverly stocked deli and food hall

Total cost (two adults, including soft drinks): £37

RATINGS

Ambience: **6/10**

Food: **7/10**

Speed of Service: **5/10**

Value for Money: **6/10**

Total: 24/40

All reviews are conducted independently. Establishments are not notified in advance, and all meals are paid for in full by Focus Magazines Ltd.

Creativity, Craft and the



One of the things I truly appreciate about the world today is that creative and artistic talent is finally recognised for what it is. When I was at school, success was largely measured by academic achievement alone. Now, thankfully, people are encouraged to embrace creativity, not just to produce something beautiful, but as a welcome antidote to our busy, often frenetic lives.

My own appreciation for creativity began at home. My mother, barely literate, entered London's 'rag trade' at just 14. Her first role was at Dunlops, working in the department designing fire-retardant racing suits for Stirling Moss. Despite her modest start, she became an exceptionally talented fashion designer and seamstress. Over the years she worked with major companies including Ladybird children's clothing and Marks & Spencer and later lectured in fashion and pattern-making at colleges.

My father served in the Royal Air Force, and my parents regularly attended Mess Balls. I used to marvel at my mother "running up" an evening dress and looking a million dollars in something she had created from remnants; on one memorable occasion, even from a pair of discarded curtains!

When my sister and I were young (we are just two years apart), Mum often made us matching outfits. I vividly remember returning to the UK from Singapore wearing corduroy pinafore dresses with perfectly coordinated jackets. At the time, I took it all rather for granted.

As a teenager, of course, all I wanted were the high-fashion clothes my friends were wearing. I can still picture my mother despairing over what she called the "cheap" quality of teenage fashion stores. There was one particularly memorable tantrum involving a pair of flared trousers and a matching poncho that I was absolutely convinced I needed!

Sadly, my mother now lives in a care home with advanced dementia and can no longer create the beautiful work she once did. Despite being encouraged as children - we had potters' wheels, made jewellery and even attempted our own clothes (which had to be unpicked if they weren't up to standard) - I never inherited Mum's practical skills. My sister certainly did and can turn her hand to almost anything. I like to think I inherited some of Mum's flair for design and fashion, although I remain entirely reliant on others to bring my ideas to life.

Art of Seeing Potential

I do, however, have a mannequin displaying the last dress Mum made for me. I was in my thirties, a good deal slimmer (!) and heading to an evening dinner. I'm not someone who usually keeps sentimental items, but that dress is one thing I simply cannot part with.

As many of you know, Parrys is based on Nevill Street here in Abergavenny - a pedestrianised street full of independent businesses. We're fortunate to be surrounded by at least five small businesses dedicated to the creative side of our community. Each brings something unique, helping to create the distinctive atmosphere that makes Nevill Street so special.

In many ways, creativity and property have more in common than you might think. Whether it's presenting a home at its absolute best, imagining how a space could be transformed, or helping buyers see the potential behind a front door, there is always an element of vision involved. After all, selling homes isn't just about bricks and mortar, it's about recognising possibility, telling a story and helping people picture the next chapter of their lives.



Heather Cook FNAEA, AssocRICS
Partner

Creativity in Nevill Street

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The Cereal Sketchers



The Cereal Sketchers is an art group based in Abergavenny, offering friendly, accessible drawing opportunities for everyone, whether an absolute beginner or professional artist. We believe everyone can draw, and that the best results come from play, encouragement and shared time with others. Since starting in 2023, we have proudly grown into a lively community of supportive creatives of all ages and backgrounds.

We now offer a variety of sessions for people to get involved in.

We have the original monthly **Breakfast Meetups**, which is where the name of the group came from! These sessions are free to attend, and held at different local cafes. We focus on observational drawing, sketching the world passing by with a cuppa and conversation. These sessions are held on Mondays or Saturdays. In the Summer we have been known to take our own breakfast into the great outdoors

to draw some local beauty spots, such as Keepers' Pond and Skenfrith Castle.

We also hold **Evening Sessions** on Fridays at the bar at the Melville Arts Centre. These are ticketed sessions, that are more structured, focusing each week on a different theme to improve your drawing skills. We do fun, timed exercises where we enjoy the process of creating rather than worrying about the finished picture. These sessions include Film Nights, where we draw from stills of films, and Life Drawing.

And new to 2026, we are starting a **Kids' Club** on Saturday mornings, hosted at Pawb Arts. For ages 8 to 13, we will be working on a theme over 6 weeks, (25/4/26-30/5/26) building on different ideas and developing new skills and confidence in a fun, supportive environment. All materials provided. We have limited places so booking essential.

If you want to get involved, check out our website at: cerealsketchers.com or email: emmamilsdraws@gmail.com.

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A Warm Welcome Awaits You at

Members of the Black Mountains Circle are waiting to welcome you to our lovely gallery in the heart of Abergavenny. Starting out just over thirty years ago as a not-for-profit co-operative of artists and craftspeople in Court Cupboard Gallery, we moved to our new home in 2023, (with some of the original founder members still on board!)



Now happily settled into Frogmore Street we are proud to offer for sale our original art, ceramics, woodcraft, stained and fused glass, jewellery, textiles, metalwork and much more. Opening every day and staffing the gallery ourselves, we are always happy to talk about our work, as well as that of our fellow members. Set over two floors, our three spacious rooms showcase our high quality, locally made, affordable art and craft, embodying the creativity and traditional skills within each members chosen discipline. In addition to the members' galleries we have a bright exhibition space

available for visiting artists to book for holding solo or group exhibitions, and a large workspace in which we offer regular workshops and art classes for those who would like to brush up their skills, or complete beginners wishing to try something new. Currently we have three members undertaking workshops:

Howard Jones inspires with his beautiful abstract, impressionistic landscapes, and is holding monthly classes this summer for up to twelve learners. Howard's friendly, informative approach offers straightforward easy-to-follow instructions and constructive advice. These classes

are run in conjunction with Chapel Cottage studio and can be booked through their website (www.chapelcottagestudio.co.uk)

Jude Lowery, equally skilled with ink, watercolour, charcoal, acrylic and other painting/drawing media, is running classes on the first and third Thursdays of every month, and this summer they will be dedicated to watercolours. The topics vary, but animal subjects figure largely as this is a passion within her own art, as can be seen in her wonderfully characterful animal and bird artwork in the ground floor gallery. Jude's classes must be booked through Chapel Cottage website, as above.

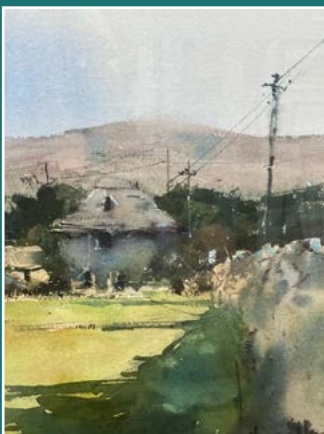


Lastly, our hard-working Chair and textile artist extraordinaire Penny Turnbull organizes the "Crafty Frogs", a regular drop-in class held every Friday morning from 11am – 1pm. No need to book, you can attend as often or as little as you like. Penny will have a different textile, mixed-media or printing project to undertake as a class, or you can bring in a piece of your own work and just enjoy the company of other crafters, with advice and help from Penny if you

The Frogmore Street Gallery

need it. As Penny says; "Friday mornings are always a joy as regular attendees bring so much enthusiasm, fun, friendship and support to each session – we all learn and grow together"

We hope to add more workshops in the future - follow us on social media, check our website or just drop into the gallery and ask the stewards on duty, we're a friendly bunch and always delighted to help if we can!



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WRITING FOR FUN

For more than ten years, our group of amateur authors has been meeting in Abergavenny



The emphasis is on sharing the creative process in a relaxed and supportive atmosphere. There is a shared theme each session. The topic can be sparked by a word, an image or an object to view. The results are as varied as the individuals who produce them.

We read our efforts aloud to an appreciative and supportive audience. The feedback is always positive and encouraging. The discussions often sparking new topics for future meetings.

Various styles of writing are explored: historical, crime fiction,

horror, factual, memoir including poetry, even illustrations. We have all enjoyed trying out new genres and listening to the wealth of talent from our fellow writers.

As a culmination of all this hard work, Pat suggested that we might publish a selection of our work to share to a wider audience. With permission from some of our amateur authors, this anthology was recently compiled and self published. We are all very proud of the fact our voices are recorded in print.

If you are interested in joining this vibrant and friendly group, they meet at the Melville Centre in Abergavenny. Contact Pat Smail on pat@paddlebrook.co.uk.

Let your creative juices flow!

Pat Smail

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Helen Absalom Art



Hi, I'm Helen. I run Helen Absalom Art. As an established artist working in oils and acrylics, I've exhibited in many galleries up and down the country. I currently have my work at The Makers Gallery at Craft Renaissance, Usk, featuring original paintings, prints and cards.

I've always had a passion for art and enjoy sharing this with others through my classes. I teach watercolour classes at Digby's Cafe, Abergavenny Garden Centre on Monday mornings and Llanelen Village Hall on Thursday mornings, 10.30am - 12.30pm. These are informal, friendly classes, where you'll learn lots of watercolour techniques, completing a finished artwork each time. I take you through each painting, step-by-step, with a variety of subjects covered, including flowers, birds, trees and nature, all with a seasonal theme. See the Weekly Events section for details. You don't need to bring anything, it's all included in the price.

If you fancy coming along, please contact Helen on 07785951974 / email helengarlick@yahoo.co.uk Facebook www.facebook.com/helenabsalomart

I also run Acrylic Paint Nights once a month at Portico Lounge, Abergavenny, a fun, creative evening out, where you can paint your own little masterpiece to impress family and friends. Check out the What's On section for details of the next one on Thurs 26th March.

My Art in The Yurt sessions are once a month at The Retreat, Llanover, where we will be painting a watercolour Floral Bee on Tues 17th March.

A new venue is Cross Ash Village Hall on Sat. 21st March, great for those who can't make a weekday.

I look forward to seeing some new faces on my classes and helping you on your creative journey.

You can sign up to my monthly newsletter through my website www.helenabsalomart.co.uk where there's details of all upcoming classes and events.

Helen Garlick

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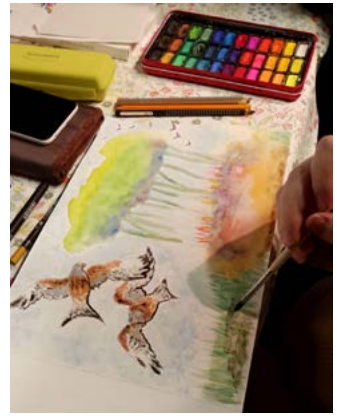
Creativity at The Tithe Barn

The Tithe Barn Community Wellbeing Cafe has become a welcoming hub for connection, creativity and support in the heart of Abergavenny. Among the regular free activities that take place here throughout the week are two weekly groups - **Crafting 4 Cancer on Tuesdays** and the **Social Painting on Fridays** - These two groups offer meaningful opportunities for wellbeing through a shared creative expression and companionship.

Crafting 4 Cancer meets every Tuesday and provides a gentle, understanding space for people who have experienced or are living with cancer. The group started out of a desire to bring together individuals and families affected by cancer to meet, chat and support one another, since then the group now also supports the local cancer

ward in the Nevill Hall Hospital in Abergavenny through activities such as knitting, card making and other various crafts along with donations. By taking part in crafting participants are able to focus their mind, reduce stress, regain a sense of calm and purpose during challenging times together with others who understand the journey as well.

On Fridays, the Social Painting Group welcomes anyone with an interest in painting, regardless of experience. This friendly gathering encourages creativity, experimentation with colour and mediums. For many, the act of painting offers a therapeutic reprieve from the daily pressures of life, while the social aspect helps reduce isolation, the art aspect helps build confidence and pursue mindful wellbeing.



These groups, along with many other activities reflect the cafe's ethos: That creativity and community can nurture emotional and mental wellbeing. Whether offering cancer related peer support or simply a chance to paint, the Tithe Barn Community Wellbeing Cafe strives to foster resilience, companionship and hope in Abergavenny.

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Monmouthshire's Free Arts Festival in our Wonderful Town of Abergavenny

Every June, in and around the Abergavenny Castle, the Abergavenny Arts Festival takes place. Many of you have attended before, but we think there are some folk who would love to know more!

The Festival is free entry, and free activities - our ethos is to provide an inclusive, accessible day that embraces all types of art, from music to poetry, dance to aerial rig, crafting to children's activities, with creativity and sustainability at our heart.

A day for all ages to and all communities to come together and enjoy everything on offer.

This year, the festival takes place on Saturday 6th June, along with the Fringe Festival in the town running for two weeks up to the day.

Can you help us, as a non-profit CIC, to raise the money needed to



pay our amazing providers of joy?

We need volunteers before the day to help fundraise, and on the day to help steward for a couple of hours, or to help set up/take down. We also need some assistance with the website please.

Are you a performer, workshop provider, or a crafts demonstrator? Do you have a delicious street food stand? We would love to hear from you! To find out more, to discover how to sponsor a workshop, or to get involved, please email abergavennyartsfestival@gmail.com



PEAK PEERS



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YMGEISIA NAWR

A CREATIVE PROGRAMME FOR PEOPLE AGED 18–30, ROOTED IN THE IMAGINATION OF RURAL WALES.

PROGRAMME DETAILS

Dates: 29 May; 5–6 June; 19–20 June;

3–4 July; 17–18 July; 7 August

Location: Abergavenny and Crickhowell

Eligibility: Ages 18–30

Support: £600 bursary to attend

Application Deadline: 9am, Monday 23 March 2026

Questions: Email ellen@peak.cymru / 07940542611

RHAGLEN GREADIGOL I BOBL IFANC RHWNG 18–30 OED, WEDI EI GWREIDDIO YN NYCHYMYG Y GYMRU WLEDIG.

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Mehefin; 3–4 Gorffennaf; 17–18 Gorffennaf; 7 Awst

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Dyddiad cau ymgeisio:

9yb, Dydd Llun 23 Mawrth 2026

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Apply for Peak Peers 2026:

a Creative Programme for 18-30 year olds in the Black Mountains and Usk Valley

Peak Peers 2024 Photography by Peak Cymru / Zeta Zentella

Applications are now open for Peak Peers 2026, a creative programme for young people aged 18 – 30 years living in Southeast Wales. Hosted by arts organisation Peak Cymru, it offers a unique opportunity for 12 young people to gain experience with artists, theatre-makers, activists and designers. It takes place over four weekends between May – July 2026 and is based at Peak's sites, The Old School, Crickhowell and Abergavenny Train Station, and across the surrounding area.

Peak Peers 2026 has been directly inspired by young people who took part in previous years. Participants said they wanted a programme that helped them imagine new ways to live and build community – and respond to the environmental, social and economic challenges of our time through creativity and collaboration.

"I came away from each weekend inspired and excited about the prospect of working in Wales and building communities." – Peak Peers participant.

Participants in this year's programme will be supported to explore local places and landscapes, take part in creative workshops, and connect with other young people in the region. Themes and mediums will include storytelling, connection to land and nature, sustainable construction, experimental theatre and creative writing.

Who can apply?

Young people aged 18-30 years, living within an hour of Abergavenny/Crickhowell are invited to apply. No creative or artistic experience is needed, the strength of the group comes from bringing together different backgrounds and perspectives.

Further information

To learn more and apply, visit: www.peakcymru.org/peak-peers-2026

To chat to a member of the team, email: ellen@peak.cymru
Deadline for applications: 9am 23rd March 2026

Cost: The programme is free and all participants are offered a bursary to take part.

Peak Cymru is an arts organisation working with young people (aged 14-30 years), artists and rural communities. We are based at the Old School in Crickhowell and Platform 2, Abergavenny Train Station. Visit our website, peakcymru.org or follow us on instagram: [@peakcymru](https://www.instagram.com/peakcymru).

Peak Peers is supported by Arts Council of Wales and Paul Hamlyn Foundation.



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CM Creative

I'm Catherine, a local pet portrait and wildlife artist and the person behind CM Creative. I started to draw during Covid as a way of relaxing and haven't looked back. The creative process gives me focus and makes me happy – it's even better when my drawings also make other people happy.

I've always had pets so know how special they are and the bond you can have with them. I use coloured pencils to create highly detailed pet portraits that capture the character of a pet in an artwork that will last a lifetime. I am passionate about bringing



your pets to life and take huge pride in making art that brings joy to my clients.

I have a keen interest in nature, and my wildlife artwork is often inspired by animals and birds I see in the

Welsh countryside. When people see my art it often brings back memories of their own wildlife encounters and I like hearing those stories. I offer a range of cards, gifts and homeware featuring my wildlife drawings. You can see my work in person at The Makers at Craft Renaissance (between Usk and Abergavenny), The Makers Club Cardiff or find me at local craft fairs.

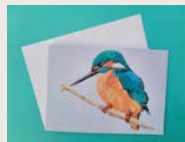
I hold coloured pencil workshops in the local area and this year I will be offering a choice of drawing a robin or kingfisher. I enjoy seeing people tapping into their creativity and, at the end, being proud of their own framed artwork. Please email if you are interested in taking part in a workshop.

If you would like to find out more about pet portraits, see more of my work or buy something from my online shop please visit my website www.cmcreative.uk. You can also contact me via email cm@cmcreative.uk - I'd love to hear from you.



CM Creative

Pet portraits and wildlife artist



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The Wool Croft

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Tucked into the heart of Abergavenny on Nevill Street, The Wool Croft has quietly become a much-loved destination for makers of all kinds. Whether you knit, crochet or stitch, this independent, award-winning shop is a true haven; the place where inspiration comes as easily as good conversation.

Inside, you'll find quality wool, thoughtfully chosen craft kits and well-stocked haberdashery, alongside the warm welcome the shop is known for. Planning your next project? The team is always happy to chat through your ideas and help you get started.



Community sits at the centre of everything here. Weekly craft clubs offer a friendly, supportive space to work alongside others and see what fellow makers are creating. Beginners' classes run throughout the year - perfect if you're ready

to pick up a new skill.

For those keen to stretch their knitting further, the Next Steps Knitting Club dives into new techniques every fortnight on Tuesdays (4-6pm). Upcoming dates: 10th & 24th March. Ask in store for details.

Meanwhile, Crafternoon every Wednesday provides a welcoming creative warm space. This FREE crafting afternoon includes a free hot drink; bring your own project or lend your skills to make handmade items supporting Tŷ Hafan Children's Hospice. It's crafting with heart, connection and wellbeing in mind.

To stay up to date with workshops, clubs and new arrivals, join the email newsletter at info@thewoolcroft.co.uk.

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Our upcoming workshops. Please contact us to book:



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10am-12:30 - with Jemima
Lumley

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£55 incl all materials and
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Monday 30th March (PM)

1:30pm-4pm - with Jemima
Lumley

**Slow Stitch a scraps
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cotton reel (PM)**

£55 incl all materials and
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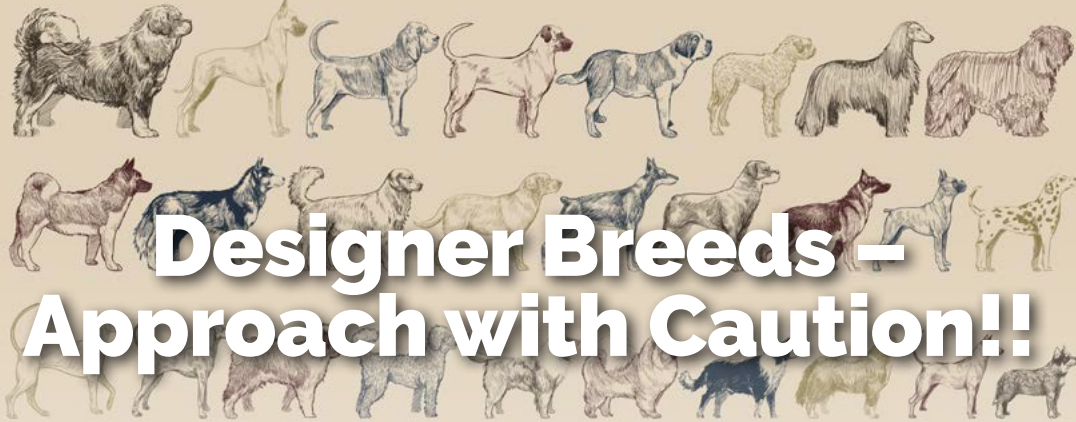
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Designer Breeds – Approach with Caution!!

We all love a cute animal, and many of our favourites are recognisable by their iconic features – long-bodied Dachshunds, squish-faced bulldogs, droopy Bassett Hounds or fluff-ball Persian cats.

In the veterinary world, however, we see the other side of the story, where these extreme body shapes cause a multitude of health problems. Some of these are minor, but some cause real welfare issues such as chronic pain, difficulty breathing, or blindness in the worst cases. In many cases, new owners have not been aware of these issues and are faced with unexpected veterinary bills for long term health issues.

In recent years, some steps have been taken to raise awareness of these issues, for example introducing Veterinary Health

checks to dogs being shown at major dog shows, and countries such as Norway banning the breeding of Cavalier King Charles Spaniels and English Bulldogs.

However, I still think there is a lot of work to be done educating the public so that they can make informed decisions about buying these pets. There is more awareness, I think, of the breathing problems associated with a bulldog's short nose, but less people may know about eyelid problems in Maine Coon cats, or severe neck pain in Cavalier King Charles Spaniels caused by the shape of the skull, or eye ulcers in Pug dogs because of their bulging eyes.

It's important to find a breeder who is interested in producing a healthy animal, so chat to them about their approach and awareness of problems, and

ask about breed improvement schemes. Some problems can now be identified using genetic tests.

It's useful to speak to a vet when selecting the breed of your next pet as they can provide guidance on the issues that they see most regularly. That beautiful Persian cat will need grooming every day to keep its fluffy coat from matting, so if you haven't got the time to do this, this may not be the pet for you.

It's really important to me as a vet that the animals in our care have a healthy and comfortable life, and we can achieve this by carefully considering how we breed and buy new pets, and giving the pet's welfare more weight than it's appearance.



Bernice Fitzmaurice
Riverside Vet Care

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BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

This month, the crafty booksellers at Book-ish have handpicked a selection of inspiring reads to ignite your creativity. Dive in and discover your next project!

The Print Making Book

Vanessa Mooncie

£14.99

The Print Making Book:

Projects and Techniques in the Art of Hand-Printing is a complete introduction to hand printing, guiding you through 23 projects using relief, screen and mono-printing techniques with easily sourced materials. No printing press is needed, and projects can be done at home in your kitchen, bathroom, or garden. Vanessa Mooncie's original designs let you create printed greetings cards, crockery, cushions, silk scarves, jewellery, bags, wallpaper, and more. With clear step-by-step instructions, templates and illustrations, this book inspires handmade, personal creations for fashion and home, perfect for unique gifts full of charm.

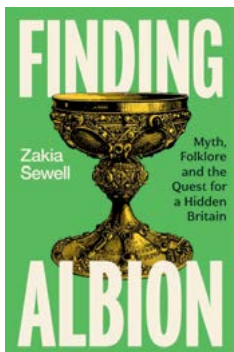
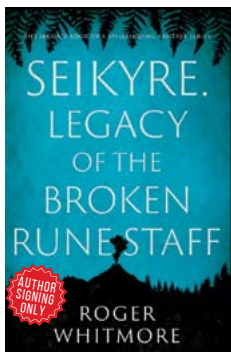
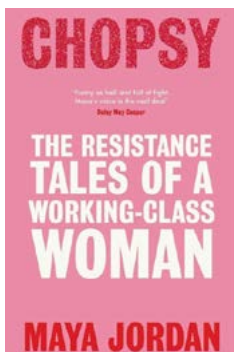
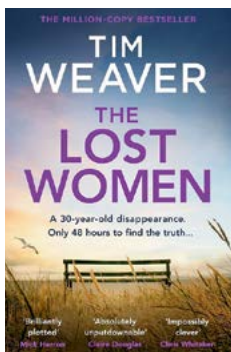
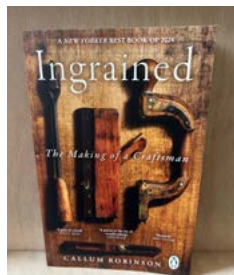


Ingrained – The Making of a Craftsman

Callum Robinson

£10.99

Ingrained is a love letter to trees, timber, and craftsmanship...and to finding your own voice. Callum Robinson, eldest son of a master woodworker, grew up surrounded by wood and trees, learning the craft in his father's workshop. As he pursued his own path, chasing bigger projects and business success, he lost touch with his roots. After a major setback threatened everything he had built, he was forced to reconsider what truly mattered. Blending memoir and nature writing, Ingrained is a heartfelt reflection on working with your hands, inheritance, community and the beauty of the natural world.



{BOOK•ISH}

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12TH MARCH, 7PM | MAYA JORDAN
BOOK-ISH, ABERGAVENNY
TICKET £8 | £13 WITH BOOK

21ST MARCH, 1PM | ROGER WHITMORE
BOOK-ISH, ABERGAVENNY
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24TH MARCH, 7:30PM | ZAKIA SEWELL
BOOK-ISH LOFT, CRICKHOWELL
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BOOK ONLINE: WWW.BOOK-ISH.CO.UK/EVENTS



Making Matters: In Search of Creative Wonders

Clare Hunter

£20

As children, making - snowmen, paper boats, playful performances - sparked imagination and shaped who we became. As adults, finding space for creativity can be harder. In *Making Matters*, Clare Hunter explores craft traditions across centuries and cultures, encouraging us to engage with the world through our hands, discover beauty and embrace imagination. From paper crafts to lanterns, puppets and pinhole cameras, she celebrates creative delight. Blending history, culture, politics and storytelling, the book highlights remarkable objects and people, inspiring readers to reconnect with making and reminding us of the joy and power of creating something with our own hands.

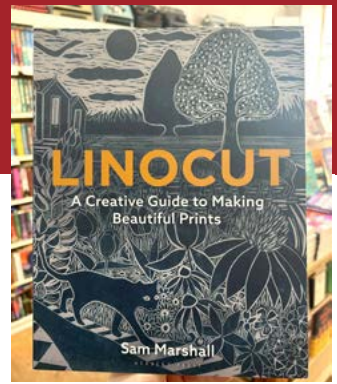


A Spring Treasury of Recipes, Crafts and Wisdom

Angela Ferraro-Fanning, Annelies Draws

£9.99

Families seeking nature-based fun away from screens will love this wholesome children's collection of cooking, crafting, and gardening projects, printed on 100% recycled paper. Young readers explore spring activities while learning seasonal tips and nature facts. From sowing seedlings and caring for baby chicks to brewing dandelion tea and crafting foraged windchimes, the book keeps kids busy on weekends or holidays. Angela Fanning encourages eco-friendly habits, supported by clear instructions and Annelies Draws' charming illustrations. Ivy Kids produces sustainably printed books that nurture creativity and children's connection to nature.

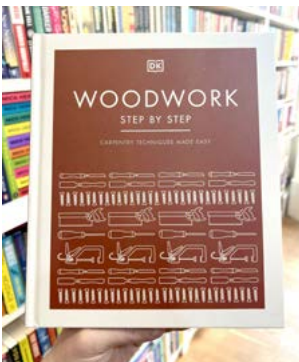


Linocut - A Creative Guide to Making Beautiful Prints

Sam Marshall

£20

A practical, step-by-step guide to creating contemporary linocut prints. Printmaker Sam Marshall explains the full process - from drawing and carving to inking and printing with 18 adaptable projects suitable for beginners or experienced artists working at a kitchen table or in a studio. Using low-cost materials and inspiration from everyday life, readers build confidence in observational drawing while learning techniques including simple and reduction linocuts, multi-block prints, monoprint, chine collé, jigsaw linocuts and rainbow rolls. Illustrated with Sam's work and guest artists, this essential guide offers creative inspiration, technical skills and expert advice on editing and refining your prints.



Woodwork Step by Step

DK

£14.99

Master key carpentry skills, from basic joinery to fine woodworking. This guide covers essential techniques, from simple woodworking and wood joints to finishing, woodturning and furniture restoration. With over 100 techniques and 20 beginner-friendly projects, it's a step-by-step resource for aspiring carpenters. Clear photography and instructions make learning easy, while expert tips show how to work with all major wood types and veneers. Discover how to maintain and use tools effectively, restore old furniture and master a variety of woodcraft techniques. Perfect for beginners, this visual guide empowers you to build, repair and create with confidence.



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Living is the Art

“Self-consciousness is the enemy of all art, be it acting, writing, painting, or living itself, which is the greatest art of all.”

~ Ray Bradbury



I can remember the first time it dawned on me that creativity had very little at all to do with 'me'. I was mucking around with my daughter at bedtime and all of a sudden found myself doing something silly, that we both found hilarious. In amongst the peals of laughter I think I remarked, “Well, that’s not something we’ve done before, is it?!” but it was only afterwards that I reflected on the deeper significance of this unassuming moment.

There were two aspects to it that really stood out for me. The first was that it was *truly* unique – something I’d not said or done, or could even recall seeing before, in my entire life. And the second was that it was nothing conscious that I’d did: it wasn’t a case of thinking about it and then choosing from a menu of uniquely-silly-things-to-amuse-my-daughter, it just occurred, spontaneously.

Which got me thinking, where on earth did that come from?! Where do *any* of our creations come from?

As somebody who writes for an audience every day, it’s a subject I find endlessly fascinating, and the accompanying exploration of topics

such as inspiration, agency and creative flow have all contributed to my understanding of life in general, and led me to conclude, somewhat heretically, that ‘I’ am not doing any of it – it’s just happening!

Of course it’s happening ‘on my watch’, if you like – it’s these hands that move on the keyboard; certain patterns of language seem unmistakably Giles-like, but I can tell you the one thing that’s going to *stop* the creative flow, and that’s over-thinking it.

As soon as I put my ‘self’ in the picture—wondering what people will think of me or my writing; racking my brains for content; believing that it’s all ‘on me’ to produce—I’ll notice I’m just staring at a flashing cursor, or reaching for my phone to procrastinate away the heavy feeling of self-consciousness.

There’s nothing *innovative* about that feeling of a self. It’s known, habitual, predictable. A bit boring really, which is no great surprise when we remember it’s constructed entirely from historical data: memory, conditioned belief, the past. To look there for something new, is a fool’s errand.

Conversely, when the notion of self is *absent*, is when the work actually

gets done. That’s when novelty *just flows*, great ideas *just occur* and the creative output *just happens*. There’s no sense of ‘me’, no sense of time, just presence, and a rediscovery of life’s infinitely creative power, expressing itself through this mind-body and all its quirks.

It’s such an irony that you’re continually encouraged to ‘be yourself’ and ‘express yourself’ when the fact of the matter is, that idea of ‘self’ is not required for creativity – it’s only ever going to get in the way!

I’d invite you to notice this for yourself, the next time you bring anything fresh into form, be it something traditionally associated with the creative arts, or even just a turn of phrase, a gesture, or a brand-new way of making your kids laugh.

In seeing that ‘you’ aren’t involved, you might find it removes some of the pressure from your endeavours, whatever they are, and allows you to show up in situations with less on your mind, and more of your true nature on offer.

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Brain-Boosting Benefits of Pilates

Pilates is often talked about in terms of core strength and better posture and this is very true! You'll stand taller and feel stronger. However, one of the most powerful benefits of Pilates isn't visible at all... your brain loves it.

The Pilates method, created by Joseph Pilates was originally called "Contrology" - the art of controlling the body with the mind. The mind-body connection goes far beyond philosophy or feel-good language; it reflects the way our nervous system organises movement, strength, and control. When you move with precision, coordinate breath with effort and focus deeply on alignment, you light up multiple areas of the brain at once. Balance, spatial awareness, memory, concentration and motor control all get to work alongside your muscles.

Research consistently shows that exercise increases blood flow to the brain, supporting the growth of new neural connections and protecting cognitive function as we age. But Pilates adds another layer: complexity. It asks you to think.

To adjust. To notice. To refine. That challenge - especially when you're learning new exercises or progressing to more demanding variations - pushes you gently out of your comfort zone. And that's where the magic happens.

When we do hard things, particularly things that require coordination and skill, we stimulate neuroplasticity - the brain's ability to adapt and rewire itself. Over time, this supports sharper thinking, better reaction times and improved resilience. In other words, a stronger brain for longer.

Longevity is a bit of a buzz word at the moment but it's not just about adding years to your life; it's about adding life to your years. Pilates strengthens the body, certainly. But it also cultivates focus, confidence and cognitive vitality. Each session becomes a small investment in your future self.

If you move with intention, rather than just exercise because you know you should, you'll reap the benefits in so many ways. Learn something new. Challenge your balance. Your muscles will thank you and your brain will quietly keep you younger for longer.

Kate Thomas

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Why Blaenavon?

The ironworks and surrounding landscape were awarded World Heritage status in November 2000, granting them the same standing as monuments such as the Egyptian Pyramids. Helen Morgan from Abergavenny Local History Society reports.

In the late 1700s a trio of entrepreneurs from Staffordshire saw the area's potential. Their aim was to exploit the mineral wealth, bringing the latest technology to a greenfield site.

The epicentre was Blaenavon. Here the essential ingredients for ironmaking — coal, limestone, iron and water — were in abundance. Led by Thomas Hill, the trio opened mines and quarries. They built the horse-drawn Blaenavon railroad to the head of the Monmouthshire canal at Pontnewynydd near Pontypool which had opened in 1796. Experienced colliers, clerks, surveyors, furnace men and foremen moved here from the Midlands but most of the workforce flooded in from rural Wales. The area remained Welsh speaking until wage cuts led to mass emigration to America, and the Welsh were largely replaced by immigrants from Ireland and England. Meanwhile, Thomas Hill completed a plateway tramroad from Blaenavon through Garnddrys to the Brecknock & Abergavenny Canal that had opened between Llanfoist



and Newport in 1812. In 1860, Blaenavon ironworks declined when Forgeside opened across the valley. Unusually, Forgeside was on freehold land, whereas most of the area was leased from Lord Abergavenny. For investors, Forgeside offered greater security, and immunity from rents and royalties. Blaenavon then entered the age of steelmaking. It was here in 1878 that Sidney Gilchrist Thomas and Percy Carlyle Gilchrist developed the Bessemer process, which transformed the world's steel industry.

As so often in the iron towns, boom times alternated with downturns. After 1900 the ironworks became the maintenance department for the company's steelworks and collieries. As heavy industry declined in the 20th century, Blaenavon became a shadow of its

former self. In 1970 the old works were scheduled for demolition — until campaigns to preserve it succeeded, and Big Pit reopened as a museum where visitors could go underground. “The character of industrial society is evident from the contrast between the iron masters’ mansions and the cottages of the new working classes, and from the schools, chapels and other social institutions that formed part of this community,” says Peter Wakelin. “The UNESCO award covering 13 square miles recognised the key role that Blaenavon played during the 18th and 19th centuries and the characteristics that defined the industrial revolution.”

Peter Wakelin's talk at the Borough Theatre on March 11th starts at 7.30pm. It is available to members only. To join visit abergavennylocalhistorysociety.org.uk





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NEXT MONTH'S FOCUS

HOMES AND A SEASONAL RESET.

With spring in the air and Easter just around the corner, next month's Focus will be all about *Homes and a Seasonal Reset*.

We'll be exploring de-cluttering, spring cleaning, home maintenance, interiors, garden spaces, and essential jobs to get done, alongside lifestyle inspiration and sustainability tips.

Be included next month!

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GET AHEAD OF THE SPRING PROPERTY RUSH



JAMES DEAN
THE ESTATE AGENTS

As winter loosens its grip and the first signs of spring appear, the property market traditionally begins to bloom. It's no secret that spring is one of the busiest times of year for home moves because gardens are looking their best, buyers are more active and families often aim to settle before summer. However, with that surge in activity comes increased competition.

For sellers thinking about making a move in 2026, getting ahead of the spring rush could make all the difference.

Launching your property early in the season, or even just before the market hits its peak, can help you stand out while buyer demand is already building but stock levels haven't yet reached their springtime high. More eyes on your home with less competition can mean stronger interest and, potentially, a smoother sale.

Preparation is key. Now is the ideal time to tackle those small maintenance jobs, refresh tired décor, and start thinking about kerb appeal. Inside, a clean, decluttered space helps buyers picture themselves living there. Outside, even simple touches like tidying borders or adding

early spring colour can create a welcoming first impression.

The team at James Dean understands the rhythms of the local market and can guide you on the best timing and strategy for your move. With expert local knowledge, professional marketing and a personal, family-focused approach, they're perfectly placed to help you make the most of the season.

If a move is on your mind this year, don't wait for the crowd. Get in touch with James Dean today and discover how their experienced team can help you get ahead of the spring market.

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