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# Dear Readers,

# Contents



April brings that familiar sense of change; days are a little longer, the light softens and our homes begin to feel ready for a fresh start. This month, we're embracing the idea of a seasonal reset: a chance to clear, refresh and gently prepare for the months ahead.

Inside this issue, you'll find practical guidance on decluttering in a way that feels manageable and meaningful, along with spring cleaning tips that are kinder to the environment...because a fresh home shouldn't come at a cost to the world around us.

As always, we have our regular features. Dive into wellbeing ideas to support your day-to-day balance, explore upcoming events in the local area and check the all-important weather forecast for the month ahead. You'll also find some great book reviews all to do with spring and lots more to enjoy at your own pace.

However you choose to welcome spring - whether it's a full home refresh or just a small change - we hope this issue brings a spot of inspiration for the season ahead.

*Hannah & Pete*

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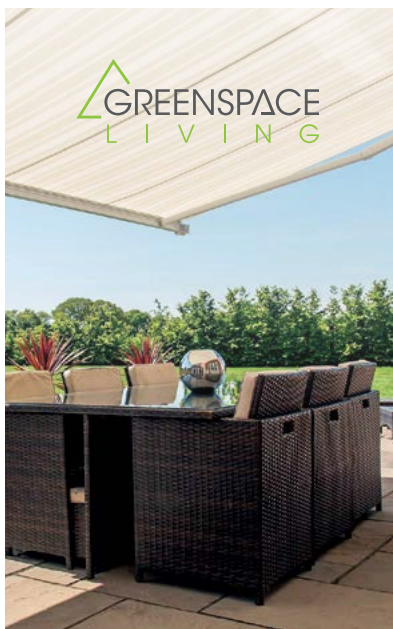


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# Community Fights Back to Save Crickhowell Sports Facilities



PHOTO: Crickhowell High School

**T**he people of Crickhowell have sent a powerful message: our sports facilities are not negotiable.

On 17 March, Crickhowell High School announced that escalating financial pressures meant it could no longer run out of hours community sports and leisure provision from 31 March. The school called it “an extremely difficult decision... we cannot take a hugely unsustainable model into the next financial year.”

The response from the community was immediate and determined. On Sunday 22 March, residents packed into a public meeting—facilitated by Cllr Claire Hall, Cllr Chloe Masefield, and local volunteers—to share concerns and fight for continued access. Clubs from right across Crickhowell were represented, all united behind one message: the facilities **MUST** stay open. Senedd Member Jane Dodds also pledged her support, praising the community’s energy and insisting on a sustainable long term plan, saying “From the packed public meeting, it is clear

the community of Crickhowell will do anything to ensure sports is available to all”.

*“community at its very best.”*

Cllr Claire Hall thanked residents for their offers of help—whether financial, practical, or specialist skills—describing the turnout as “Crickhowell community at its very best.”

That determination quickly produced results. On Thursday 26 March, after intensive work with Powys County Council officers, local clubs, and community representatives, the school announced the creation of a new

Partnership Group. This group will coordinate the reinstatement of community use of the pitches and sports hall following the temporary halt in bookings. The school highlighted the pressures behind its earlier decision, while club representatives stressed just how vital the facilities are for local groups and especially young people.

The Partnership Group has already secured a short term operating model for the summer term. The school will provide weekday access **until 8pm for the sports hall and 9pm for the pitches**, with Saturday morning access under active review.

Work is also underway on a community focused grant application for an external toilet block, with the Group offering support throughout the process. Monthly meetings will continue as the community and school collaborate on a long term, sustainable way to safeguard these well loved facilities.

*Chloe Masefield*

# YOUTH NATURE GUARDIANS

## GWARCHEIDIAD NATUR IFANC



### ARE YOU 14-30 AND LIVING IN OR NEAR THE USK VALLEY?

Curious about the river Usk and how communities can look after it? Want to meet others, learn new things, and share your ideas?

### JOIN YOUTH NATURE GUARDIANS.

We meet every school holiday for creative workshops and river visits. We also take part in Usk Catchment Partnership meetings — listening to decision-makers and sharing our ideas for how the river can be cared for and restored.

### UPCOMING DATES

Friday 10 April

(May, Summer, and October dates TBC)

At The Old School, Brecon Road, Crickhowell, Powys, NP8 1DG

### LEARN MORE AND SIGN UP:

[peakcymru.org/the-living-usk](http://peakcymru.org/the-living-usk)

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# Calling all Young Nature Guardians!



**If** you're aged between 14 and 30 and live in or around the Usk Valley, an exciting opportunity is opening up to get involved with nature, meet new people, and make a real difference locally.

Youth Nature Guardians is a growing group of young people who share an interest in the River Usk and the environment around it. The programme offers a chance to explore the river, learn about the challenges it faces, and take part in shaping ideas about how it can be protected for future generations.

Meeting during school holidays, the group brings together creativity, learning and hands-

on experiences. Sessions include interactive workshops as well as visits to the river itself, giving participants the opportunity to connect directly with the landscape and better understand its importance to local communities and wildlife.

But Youth Nature Guardians is about more than just learning; it's about being heard. Members are invited to take part in Usk Catchment Partnership meetings, where they can listen to discussions between organisations and decision-makers, and share their own perspectives. It's a rare chance for young people to contribute ideas and play a role in conversations about the future of the river.

Whether you're already passionate about the environment or simply curious to learn more, the group is open to anyone interested in getting involved. No prior experience is needed; just a willingness to take part, share ideas and try something new.

The next session will take place on **Friday 10 April at The Old School, Brecon Road, Crickhowell (NP8 1DG)**. Further dates are planned for May, summer, and October, with details to be confirmed.

Youth Nature Guardians offers a welcoming and supportive space to meet like-minded people, build confidence, and develop new skills; all while contributing to the care of one of the area's most important natural assets. The programme is developed in partnership with Action for Conservation, LANDED and the Usk Catchment Partnership, it's funded by Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

To find out more and sign up, visit: [peakcymru.org/the-living-usk](http://peakcymru.org/the-living-usk)

If you have any questions, you can also get in touch directly via email at [ellen@peak.cymru](mailto:ellen@peak.cymru) or by calling 07940 542611.



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Big Pit National Coal Museum**

**amgueddfa.cymru  
museum.wales**



# Big Pit for Easter

**A** trip to Big Pit National Coal Museum is the perfect Easter outing – so why wait? Hop on over and make a day of it.

Perched on the hillside above Blaenavon, Big Pit brings Wales' coal mining heritage vividly

to life – the power of the coal that built communities, and the resilience of the people who worked beneath the ground. Whether you've been before or visiting for the first time, you can travel 300 feet underground with a guide, hear first-hand accounts of mining life, and immerse yourself in the sounds and atmosphere that shaped generations.

Back above ground, explore a multi media tour of a modern coal mine, wander through the Pithead Baths and historic colliery buildings, and delve deeper into the stories that defined the valleys.

Families can pick up a free Easter Trail from 28 March to 12 April and uncover more about the Valleys High Streets, or join our hands on workshops. Expect dressing up, role play inspired by mining communities, and the chance to craft your own bunny ears for the trail.

The coffee shop will be open with hot and cold drinks, cakes, sandwiches and snacks. And be sure to browse our new gift shop, stocked with a lovely range of gifts and souvenirs.

Big Pit is open daily from 9.30am to 5pm. Entry to the Museum and all activities is free. Parking and Underground Tour charges apply. Please note: children must be at least one metre tall to join the Underground Tour.

[www.museum.wales/bigpit](http://www.museum.wales/bigpit)



# Concert for Crick

**C**rickhowell Rotary is turning up the volume with **Concert for Crick**—an evening where great music, good company and community spirit come together under one roof. Taking place at The Clarence Hall on Saturday 18th April from 7pm, this promises to be far more than your average fundraiser.



Expect an uplifting mix of blues, rock, and acoustic sounds, with talented performers ready to raise the rafters and get toes tapping. Whether you're a fan of soulful guitar, classic rock energy or laid-back acoustic vibes, there'll be something for everyone to enjoy. It's the perfect excuse for a night out with friends, neighbours and fellow music lovers.

But this isn't just about the music—it's about bringing people together. The idea behind Concert for Crick is simple: swap the usual raffles and street collections for something a little more memorable. Instead of being asked for donations, you're invited to enjoy a lively, feel-good evening where every ticket helps support local causes.

Crickhowell Rotary has long been at the heart of the community, quietly making a difference through both hands-on support and fundraising. Now, with a growing and enthusiastic membership, they're embracing fresh ideas like this to keep that tradition alive—while making it even more engaging for everyone involved.

So come along, soak up the atmosphere, and be part of something special. For just £10 a ticket, you'll enjoy a great night of live entertainment while helping support the community at the same time.

Tickets are available now at: [crickhowellrotary.co.uk/tickets](http://crickhowellrotary.co.uk/tickets)

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# From Potholes to Progress

**If** you've driven around Brecon, Talgarth or Crickhowell lately, you'll know it's been a bit of a bumpy ride - literally! In last month's magazine, we shared residents' frustrations about potholes popping up after heavy rain, with some roads turning into real obstacle courses. From damaged tyres to costly suspension repairs, even the most careful drivers have been feeling the strain.

But there's some good news to report; Powys County Council has announced a welcome £2.5 million boost to its highways maintenance programme, thanks to additional funding from the Welsh Government. And this time, the focus is not just on quick fixes, but on longer-lasting improvements that should make a real difference across the county.

The timing couldn't be better. As we reported previously, areas like the roundabout near Theatr Brycheiniog, stretches of the A470 and roads through Brecon town centre have all been showing serious wear

and tear. Many residents were understandably frustrated with temporary repairs that didn't seem to last; some potholes even reappearing just weeks after being filled.

Behind the scenes, however, work has already been underway. Earlier this year, the council allocated an extra £1.2 million specifically for drainage; one of the biggest contributors to road damage. Since then, highways teams have cleared miles of ditches, cut back overgrown verges to restore road width and repaired thousands of drainage grips and gullies. These may not always be the most visible changes, but they play a crucial role in keeping water off the roads and preventing further deterioration.

Now, with this new funding, the council is stepping things up a gear. Plans include expanding structural road repairs and investing in specialist machinery designed to properly cut out and repair damaged sections of road. It's a shift away from the much-criticised 'quick patch' approach and towards more durable, cost-effective solutions.

There are already signs of what's possible. As highlighted in our previous article, ongoing work in Builth Wells has been praised for its thoroughness, tackling deeper issues like collapsed drains as well as surface damage. Some newly resurfaced stretches are already providing a much smoother ride; something both residents and visitors can appreciate.

Council leaders say the aim is simple: better roads that last longer, are safer for everyone, and are more sustainable to maintain. Fewer repeat repairs also mean better value for money and less environmental impact over time.

Of course, many in the community will be watching closely, and understandably so. But for now, there's a growing sense that things are heading in the right direction.

So while the bumps may not disappear overnight, smoother journeys could soon be just around the corner.

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# CRICKHOWELL MUSIC FESTIVAL

1ST MAY - 4TH MAY 2026



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## Rites of Passage

A celebration of life's rich tapestry



**Crickhowell Choral Society**

Singing in the Usk valley. Yn canu yng Nghwm Wysg

# Rites of Passage

## A celebration of life's rich tapestry



**T**he 2026 Crickhowell Music Festival is fast approaching! This year's theme shows composers at their most inspired, expressing our deepest loves, hopes and fears in music that charts the milestones of human experience.

We open on Friday, May 1st with the **Kosmos Ensemble**, an exuberant and much acclaimed trio with songs and dances from around the world. Expect a kaleidoscope of folk styles guaranteed to get your feet tapping.

Saturday brings all the changing scenes of life, enjoying birthday blessings courtesy of **Purcell** and

love songs for newlyweds from **J.S. Bach** and **Eric Whitacre**. We also mark the 'coming of age' with sacred texts associated with the Jewish bar mitzvah and Christian confirmation ceremonies in fascinating settings by two relatively unsung musical geniuses - a Nisi Dominus by **Caldara**, and **Mondonville's** dramatic psalm setting, *In exitu Israel*. This is a re-enactment of the Exodus story, symbolising individual freedom and spiritual renewal. It's simply stunning and our performance should go some way to bringing a hidden masterpiece into the limelight.

Sunday continues with yet more lost treasures to accompany **Mozart's** famous Requiem Mass

including a short motet by its composer, another by **Schubert**, and an inspired setting of the Creed by **Zelenka**, a Czech genius who was a contemporary of J.S. Bach.

Finally on Bank Holiday Monday we celebrate ten years of our innovative choral scholars' scheme. Here we can experience at first hand the rejuvenating power of singing, courtesy of our talented students past and present. As the song goes, "who could ask for anything more?"

For further information, visit [www.crickhowellchoralsociety.org](http://www.crickhowellchoralsociety.org) or see us on Facebook

# WHATS ON

**4TH APRIL  
CAR BOOT SALE**

Tea, coffee and pancakes available 9am, Talgarth Community Hall All money raised goes to the upkeep of the hall

**4TH APRIL  
BRECON CLASSIC MOTORCYCLE SHOW 2026**



10am-4pm, Market Hall, Brecon. Free Entry

**4TH APRIL  
Talgarth Festival Presents:  
THE EASTER CHILDREN'S EVENT**



Crafting, Easter trail, cakes, mini show & more. Duck race at 2pm From 10am, Talgarth Market Hall

**10TH APRIL  
YOUTH NATURE GUARDIANS**  
Old School, Brecon Rd, Crickhowell  
See Page 6-7

**13TH APRIL  
Book-ish Event  
SARAH HILARY & VASEEM KHAN**  
7:30pm, Book-ish Crickhowell  
See Page 26 for ticket info

**14TH APRIL  
FUNDRAISING CURRY NIGHT –  
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**14TH APRIL  
Book-ish Event  
BEN RAWLENCE**  
7:30pm, Book-ish, Crickhowell  
See Page 26 for ticket info

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**18TH APRIL****TALGARTH FARMERS' MARKET**

9am-12pm, Talgarth Townhall

**18TH APRIL****Book-ish Event  
ALEX PRESTON**

7:30pm, Book-ish Crickhowell

See Page 26 for ticket info

**18TH APRIL  
CONCERT FOR  
CRICK**

7pm,  
Clarence Hall,  
Crickhowell

See Page 11 for  
tickets and info

**24TH APRIL****BOOK-ISH EVENT  
JANE HARPER**

7.30pm, Parkway Hotel, Cwmbbran

See Page 26 for ticket info

**25TH APRIL****BRECON VINTAGE, ANTIQUE,  
CRAFT & COLLECTORS' MARKET**

9am-4pm, Market Hall, Brecon

**30TH APRIL****HEALTH & WELLBEING DROP-IN**

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**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](http://www.crickhowellchoralsociety.org)

See Page 19

**3RD MAY****A TASTE OF TALGARTH**

An afternoon of ideas, exploration and feasting hosted by Kate Humble. Conversation, walks, feast, charity auction, children's craft & trails.

Tickets £15 or £8 for Talgarth

residents. For tickets [www.talgarthmill.com](http://www.talgarthmill.com). The event will raise funds for Mill maintenance. Talgarth Mill, Talgarth

**16TH MAY****GROW FOR TALGARTH – PLANT  
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[growfortalgarth22@gmail.com](mailto:growfortalgarth22@gmail.com)

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Go to [thefocus.wales/calendar](http://thefocus.wales/calendar)

**A Note about Events**

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

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## HOW CAN I MAKE BETTER USE OF MY GARDEN?

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

Also look at those areas of your garden that maybe get the sun at different times of the day or are currently neglected and think about how a simple composite deck can

create a new area. Sometimes these areas only need to be big enough for a table and chairs for a summer weekend breakfast or a couple of loungers for a lazy summer evening and make a difference to the use of the garden.

## HOW CAN I ENSURE I USE MY GARDEN IN ALL WEATHERS AND LONGER SUMMERS?

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

A young family may opt for an awning to provide shade for

children to play under during the summer days with the benefit of rain protection; this covered space can also be used to relax or entertain under with family and friends.

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



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

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# A Gentle Spring Clean

## Small Swaps for a Greener Home

**S**pring has a way of nudging us to open the windows, shake off the winter dust and give our homes a fresh start. A seasonal reset doesn't have to mean cupboards full of harsh chemicals or a trolley full of new products. In fact, the most sustainable cleaning tricks are often the simplest...and a little bit clever.



Take lemons, for example. A leftover half from last night's cooking can work wonders in the kitchen. Sprinkle salt onto the cut side and use it to scrub wooden chopping boards or

stubborn marks on worktops. It smells fresh, cuts through grease and saves a perfectly good lemon from the compost bin for one last job.

Old newspapers, lingering in the recycling bin, are brilliant for streak-free windows and mirrors. A quick spritz of diluted vinegar and a sheet of newspaper can leave glass sparkling while avoiding disposable wipes or paper towels.

Spring is also a good moment to rethink what you throw away. Worn-out t-shirts or pillowcases make excellent cleaning cloths. Cut them into squares and keep a small stack under the sink; they're soft, washable and far better for the planet than single-use wipes.

For a subtle home refresh, try a natural air reset. Simmer a small pan of water with citrus peels, rosemary or a cinnamon stick

for a gentle fragrance that feels far more inviting than synthetic sprays.



Finally, don't underestimate the power of sunlight itself. On a bright spring morning, throw open the windows and let fresh air circulate. Sunlight naturally helps reduce odours and can freshen soft furnishings like cushions or throws when they're left near an open window.

A spring clean doesn't have to be bigger; it can simply be smarter. With a few thoughtful swaps, your seasonal reset can feel lighter for both your home and the planet.

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# 10 Fast and Easy Tips for Decluttering Your Space This Spring



**S**pring is often seen as the perfect time for a fresh start. Longer days and a bit of sunshine can make us suddenly notice how cluttered our homes have become over the winter months. But the idea of tackling a full spring clean can feel overwhelming. The good news is that decluttering doesn't have to be a huge project. Small, manageable steps can make a big difference.

Here are ten quick and easy ways to start clearing your space without the stress.

## 1. Start with just ten minutes

Set a timer and focus on one small

area. You'll be surprised how much you can achieve in a short burst.

## 2. Pick one drawer

Instead of tackling an entire room, choose a single drawer or cupboard. Finishing a small task gives you a sense of progress.

## 3. Use the *three pile* rule

Sort items into three categories: keep, donate and throw away. This simple system speeds up decision-making.

## 4. Clear surfaces first

Decluttering visible spaces like countertops, coffee tables and bedside cabinets instantly makes a room feel tidier.

## 5. Be honest about duplicates

Most households have multiples of the same item: mugs, utensils, tote bags. Keep your favourites and pass the rest on.

## 6. Fill one bag for charity

Challenge yourself to fill a single bag with items you no longer use. It's manageable and helps others at the same time.

## 7. Tackle the clutter magnets

Hallway tables, kitchen corners and the infamous "chair for clothes" often collect random items. A quick reset here has a big visual impact.

## 8. Digitise paperwork

Scan important documents and recycle old papers where possible. Paper clutter builds up quickly but is easy to reduce.

## 9. Create a "maybe" box

If you're unsure about certain items, place them in a box and store it out of sight. If you haven't missed them in a few months, it's probably safe to let them go.

## 10. Celebrate small wins

Decluttering doesn't need to happen all at once. Each small step creates a calmer, more organised space.

Remember, the goal isn't perfection. Even a little progress can make your home feel lighter, more spacious and ready for the new season.

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# Sort your Mind Out

*“How many steps does it take to get to where you are? How much time does it take to arrive at this moment?”*

~ Leo Hartong

**Isn't it great to declutter? To put time aside, commit to downsizing and then revel in the order, and the clear space you've just created? It's one of those efforts that feels worth it, once it's done.**

Another place where it feels good to get clarity and space is 'upstairs', in the attic of our mind. Because that gets cluttered even more easily than the house, to the point where every mental cupboard we open has stuff tumbling out and ruining our day. And unlike a periodic spring clean, the deluge of thought is so relentless that it can sometimes seem like a constant battle to stay on top of our mental wellbeing.

This is something that hasn't gone unnoticed by the makers of meditation and mental wellness apps (now a multi-billion dollar industry), and I'm willing to bet that you've either got one of these apps on your phone, or at the very least have been told you should definitely try it.

There's plenty of evidence in support of a mindfulness practice – but only if you actually *do* it, which most of us—me included—don't. One study showed that as few as 7% of people who began using a meditation app were still doing so, 30 days later.

If it's so great, why are 93% of us not willing to put the effort in, in order to feel better?

The answer, as ever, lies in a misunderstanding about where our experience actually comes from. Because while the 7% will swear blind that meditation is the *reason* for their calm demeanour, correlation is not causation. Presence and peace are inbuilt features of the human operating system we've *all* been gifted, and both are experienced each and every time we're not taking our thinking seriously – irrespective of circumstances.

I'm not knocking meditation, and if you truly love to do it, then please don't stop! It's more that if we're using it as a tool to *manage* our experience—trying to be calm!—then ironically we're adding fuel to the fire, by reinforcing the illusion that thought is in some way problematic and needs to be coped with.

It's ironic that some of the greatest proponents of meditation could spend the day being hassled by 'stressful' thinking, to then have to escape into the 'refuge' of mindfulness in the evening.

When we realise that thought is neutral, and requires no managing;

and we see that being present occurs naturally when we stop *trying* to be present, this *need* is instantly removed. As the author of the quote above said, *“You may make a great effort to be fully here and now, but even if you wanted to, could you be anywhere else?”*

Maybe it's time to leave behind the visual metaphor of the mind as a cluttered cupboard that needs sorting out, and instead see it as a tranquil expanse of undisturbed water. Life's happenstance will surely throw stones of various size into this pond and, because we are human, accordingly, ripples of thought will appear.

To return to clarity and peace, there's only one thing to do – let it settle, *without* getting involved. Wading out there to try and iron out the ripples somehow, is only going to make matters worse.

That's something to be mindful of.

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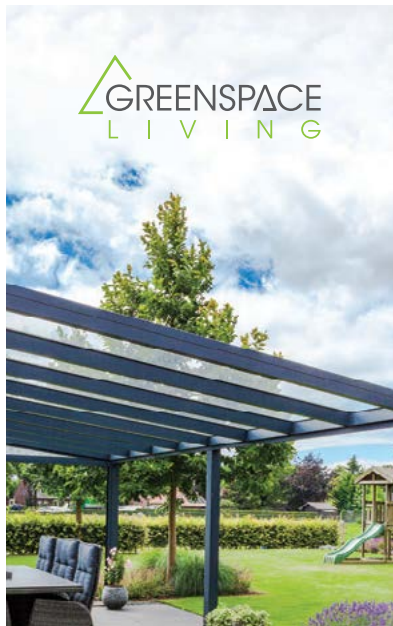
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# April Weather Outlook

by Jonathan Powell

Following on from a March that struggled to break free from what was a generally very wet and almost completely snow-free winter, April does not look set to offer much in the way of relief from the rain or providing any uplifting temperatures of note. Therefore, as we edge through spring, expect another month of unsettled weather with spells of rain, heavy at times, interspersed by drier and brighter conditions. At no juncture does there seem to be any sustained stability to the weather with the positioning of the jet stream allowing the Atlantic to rattle through continual low pressure systems from the west. At times, possibly through mid-April, a collection of drier days may be strung together with some sunshine that will push temperatures upward. May looks likely to start with a stutter, but a fair chance of improving conditions as the month progresses with temperatures climbing. April will probably reflect a wetter than average month with temperatures on or around the average.



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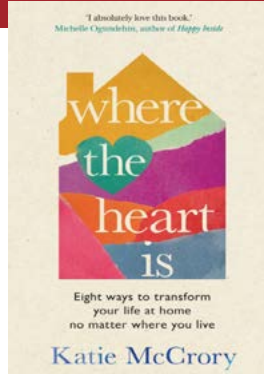
# BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

*The Book-ish Booksellers' give us their top spring picks for brighter days, cosy homes and a touch of whimsy.*

*Where the Heart Is: Eight Ways to Transform Your Life at Home, No Matter Where You Live*

**Katie McCrory** - £16.99

Why do so many of us neglect our domestic lives? In an age of unattainable interior trends and a deepening housing crisis, one in three people don't feel at home where they live and only 56% experience joy there. Yet our sense of home strongly shapes how we feel about ourselves. The good news: nothing physical has to change for a home to feel different. Drawing on the IKEA Life at Home Report, Katie McCrory identifies eight emotional foundations of home: comfort, control, security, accomplishment, belonging, nurture, enjoyment and aspiration. Through practical advice and simple strategies, she shows how anyone - renting or owning, living alone or with family - can transform their relationship with home.



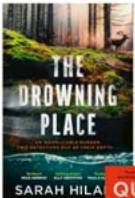
*Tales from Acorn Wood:*

*Spring, A Push, Pull and Slide Book*

**Julia Donaldson & Axel Scheffler**

£7.99

Welcome to Acorn Wood, where Rabbit, Cat, Hen and friends are celebrating Spring! This interactive push, pull and slide book lets toddlers join the fun: help Tortoise on a sunny bike ride, pick daffodils with Fox and enjoy a meadow picnic with Pig and Badger. With simple text and lots of springtime details to spot, it's perfect for fans of the bestselling Tales from Acorn Wood series by Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler, creators of The Gruffalo. Ideal as an Easter gift, this charming book brings all the beloved animal characters to life in a joyful, hands-on experience.



## {BOOK•ISH}

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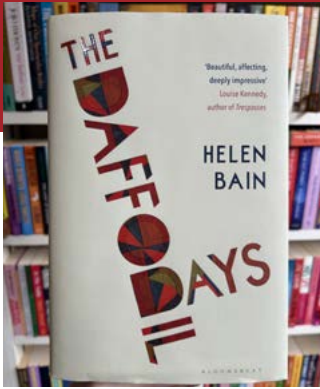
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### *The Daffodil Days*

**Helen Bain**

£18.99

In a small town, lives quietly intersect: a GP who knows too much about his patients, a shop assistant who senses customers seeking new selves and a farm labourer whose church bells echo across the rooftops. Into this community arrives a young couple with their small daughter, fleeing London for a quieter life in the thatched house beside the church, Court Green. They imagine a happy future of simple comforts and welcoming suppers. The Daffodil Days portrays a pivotal year in the marriage of one of the twentieth century's most infamous literary couples, seen through the watchful, richly imagined lives of the rural community around them.

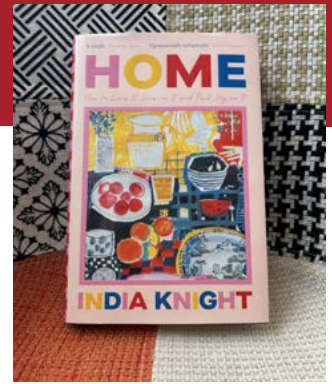


### *A Poem for Every Spring Day*

**Chosen by Allie Esiri**

£9.99

A perfect gift for poetry lovers, this collection draws from Allie Esiri's bestselling anthologies A Poem for Every Day of the Year and A Poem for Every Night of the Year. Ideal for reading aloud and sharing with family, it blends well-loved classics with striking contemporary voices. Each seasonal poem is paired with a short introduction and connected to the date on which it appears, creating a meaningful journey through the year. The selection features poets including William Wordsworth, Christina Rossetti, John Donne and Emily Dickinson, alongside modern voices such as Ted Hughes, John Agard, Maya Angelou, Wendy Cope, John Cooper Clarke and Carol Ann Duffy.



### *Home: How to Love it, Live in it and Find Joy in it*

**India Knight**

£22

Inspired by her popular Substack newsletter, India Knight's Home is a warm, practical and entertaining guide to creating spaces that feel truly yours. Whether your home is grand or modest, rented or owned, shared or solo, her aim is simple: to make you feel content the moment you walk through the door. From choosing flattering paint colours and lightbulbs to hosting dinner or buying a sofa, she demystifies "taste" and celebrates charm over trends. Room by room, Knight offers advice, stories and life lessons that encourage you to use what you already have, trust your instincts and find joy in every corner of home.



### *Clean Magic*

**Nancy Birtwhistle**

£15.99

From The Great British Bake Off winner Nancy Birtwhistle, Clean Magic is a practical guide to greener cleaning at home. Packed with down-to-earth advice, it shows how to tackle everyday chores using Nancy's tried-and-tested methods. From stubborn stains to simple homemade solutions and themed deep cleans, she explains the right tools and techniques for the job, often with just a quick spray or wipe. With 100 new tips and ideas, the book helps reduce pollutant ingredients without sacrificing cleanliness, efficiency or budget. Clean Magic makes switching to eco-friendly habits simple and satisfying, helping you keep a naturally fresh, sparkling home while caring for the planet.

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# Halo, The Courtyard, Crickhowell

*A lively lunchtime spot serving colourful, feel-good food*



**A**midweek lunch at Halo Café proved pleasantly lively when we visited on a Wednesday, with the café buzzing with a steady flow of customers. Tucked away in The Courtyard just off Standard Street, it's a convenient little spot, particularly if you manage to grab one of the free one-hour parking spaces nearby, which makes for an easy, relaxed lunch stop.

On warmer days, the outdoor seating area would be a real draw. The courtyard setting, dotted with small independent businesses, feels calm and tucked away from the bustle of the high street. On our visit, however, we opted to sit inside.

The café itself is friendly and welcoming rather than cosy. It's dog-friendly, which means the décor leans practical rather than plush, but the atmosphere is relaxed and informal. A small corner showcasing gifts by local makers and independent crafters adds a nice touch. Facilities are well maintained, too; the toilets were clean and thoughtfully equipped with a full-sized changing table.

The menu strikes a pleasing balance between café classics and lighter, healthier options. Think cheese toasts, baguettes and soup of the day alongside Buddha bowls and salad bowls. We opted for a Halo Buddha Bowl (£15) with Cajun chicken and a Halo Fajita Salad Bowl (£14), also topped

with Cajun chicken. Both were generously portioned and gluten-free and clearly prepared with fresh ingredients rather than processed shortcuts.

Buddha bowls live or die by their flavour combinations, and these delivered plenty of zing and colour. The result is a lunch that feels both satisfying and virtuous. Our only small criticism was that the chicken leaned slightly on the dry side, though it didn't diminish the overall enjoyment. I paired mine with a matcha latte - smooth, well-balanced and delicious, even without latte art.

Service was warm and attentive throughout. Staff were quick to check if we needed anything, happily accommodating neighbouring diners with dietary swaps and even offering their dog a treat, which we thought was a nice gesture.

To finish, my partner chose a peanut butter and caramel flapjack (£3.50) - generous, indulgently sweet and enjoyable.



Total cost (two adults, including drinks):  
**£39.55**

## RATINGS

Ambience: **6/10**

Food: **8/10**

Service: **10/10**

Value for Money: **7/10**

**Total: 31/40**

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



NEXT MONTH'S FOCUS

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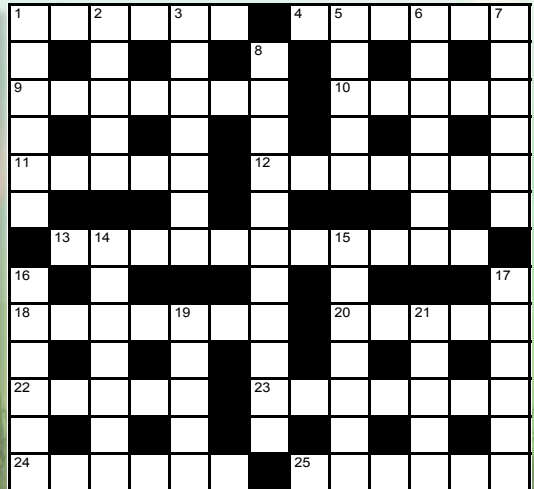
## Quick Crossword

### ACROSS

1. Not private (6)
- 4 One belonging to a club (6)
- 9 Endure (7)
- 10 Book of maps (5)
- 11 Surplus (5)
- 12 Design (7)
- 13 Discontinued (11)
- 18 Withdraw (7)
- 20 Living (5)
- 22 Concerning (5)
- 23 Outside light (7)
- 24 Removing (6)
- 25 Two wheeled vehicles (6)

### DOWN

- 1 Mailed (6)
- 2 Destroyed by fire (5)
- 3 Copy (7)
- 5 Precise (5)
- 6 Accept as true (7)
- 7 Climbing up (6)
- 8 Frantically (11)
- 14 Interconnected system (7)
- 15 Clearly (7)
- 16 Chicken meat (6)
- 17 Racket game (6)
- 19 Consumed (5)
- 21 Perfect (5)



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