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STEAM RALLY**  
24 & 25TH MAY, BAILEY PARK  
SEE PAGES 8-9 INSIDE



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# Dear Readers,

# Contents



I've just come back from a family holiday and was amazed by how much everything had changed in just a week. Spring has well and truly arrived! It's a joy to see the swifts back, carpets of bluebells in the woods and, up on Buckland Hill, to hear cuckoos calling again.

This time of year always feels like a quiet turning point. Not that the community ever really slows down, but in spring it seems to burst into life. Suddenly, the calendar is full: events, local groups, festivals, concerts... there's something happening everywhere you look.

Our area really comes into its own around this time, and a quick flick through this month's magazine proves just that. There's plenty to discover, whether you're looking to try something new or simply enjoy what's on your doorstep.

Here's hoping the sunny spell continues so you can get out and make the most of it all.

Enjoy this month's read.

## Hannah & Pete

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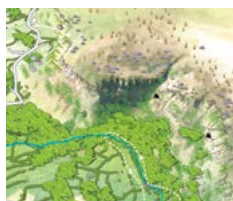
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# Llangattock Community Woodlands



**L**ooking for a rewarding way to spend time outdoors, meet new people, and make a real difference in your local environment? Llangattock Community Woodlands is inviting volunteers of all ages and abilities to get involved in their inspiring work.

This community-based charity is dedicated to enhancing biodiversity, improving the health of local woodlands, and creating beautiful, sustainable wood products. Their work not only supports the natural environment but also brings people together through shared purpose and practical activity.

Volunteers meet weekly on Tuesday mornings at 9am, gathering at the woodland site on the edge of Llangattock. Each session offers a variety of outdoor activities designed to suit different interests and skill levels. Whether you're a complete beginner or already have experience, there's always something new to learn—from woodland management techniques to traditional crafts.

One of the highlights of volunteering is the welcoming and friendly atmosphere. You'll be joining a group of like-minded people who enjoy spending time outdoors and supporting one another. It's a great opportunity to build friendships, boost wellbeing, and enjoy the benefits of fresh air and gentle physical activity.

Llangattock Community Woodlands also ensures that all volunteers are supported with appropriate training and personal protective equipment (PPE), so you can take part safely and confidently. And after a productive session, you can relax and chat over free refreshments in their recently constructed outdoor shelter.

Beyond the social and personal benefits, volunteers play a vital role in improving local biodiversity. Activities such as habitat creation and woodland management help protect and enhance the natural landscape for future generations.

The organisation is also currently looking for new Trustees and a Treasurer, offering a chance to contribute at a leadership level and help shape the future of the charity.

If you're interested in getting involved, you can find more information online or reach out via email. Whether you can spare time regularly or just want to give it a try, you'll be warmly welcomed into this thriving community initiative.

**VOLUNTEER WITH US**

We are a community based charity working to enhance biodiversity, improve the health of woodlands and create wood products.

**What we offer?**

- Friendly group of like minded people to spend time with
- Weekly (Tuesday 9am) outdoor activities to suit all ages and abilities based in our woodland on the edge of Llangattock
- Chance to learn new skills and crafts
- Appropriate PPE and training
- Free refreshments provided in our recently constructed outdoor shelter
- Chance to improve local biodiversity through habitat creation, woodland management and habitat management

**We are also seeking new Trustees & a Treasurer**

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# Community Gardening Group Welcomes New Members



**T**wo seasons in, 'Our Plot,' a community gardening group in Crickhowell, are hoping that more local people will join their fun.

Peak Cymru at The Old School in Crickhowell is the site for their regular drop-in growing, making and cooking sessions. Together, this small, friendly group of local adults – sometimes with young children or grandchildren in tow – have been teaching each other how to sow and tend to vegetables, herbs and flowers in raised beds. And throughout the seasons, between sessions weeding amid an April shower or watering in the August heat, the group have gathered in Peak's large, light main studio and kitchen to cook and share meals with the best of their harvests.

Back in 2024, arts organisation Peak was able to support the group to get their new growing space off the ground. With the help of an experienced gardener and a range of artists, makers and cooks, Our Plot grew into a creative programme inspired by the garden and its potential. Local young people helped shape the vision of what this garden could be in the future: "an artist studio", "a place to grow things we love", "a place to rest". In the meantime, a regular group of volunteers gathered around the collective joy of learning new skills and making new friends.

As they enter their third growing season, Our Plot are keen to welcome more local people who are interested in spending time with their hands in the soil, meeting other growing enthusiasts or simply having a cuppa with a new neighbour. The group enjoy deciding what to grow together, and learning how best to devour it when the harvest is ready, or how to accept those experiments that don't quite come off. They've had advice from and made visits to local market gardens to develop their collective knowledge, and are looking forward to more outings and activities as the new growing season fast approaches.



Meanwhile, Peak are working with local, award-winning garden designers Sarah Price Landscapes to expand the possibilities of this experimental community growing space in Crickhowell into the future. Beyond 2026, Our Plot may be sowing their seeds in a garden that looks very different to the former playground of The Old School, and they hope you'll be joining them.

*This project is supported by The Oakdale Trust.*

## OUR PLOT EIN DARN O DIR

Do you live in or near Crickhowell? Are you interested in joining a community gardening group? Come and join **Our Plot** at The Old School, Crickhowell!

### WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

- Meet and work together with other local people
- Learn to grow your own food and maintain an edible garden
- Celebrate the seasons through growing and cooking

### WHO YOU ARE

- An adult of any age (18+) living within an hour of Crickhowell
- Keen to work with other people and swap skills
- No previous gardening experience necessary

**Fortnightly drop-in sessions take place on Thursdays 1- 4pm.**

**For dates and more information, email [polly@peak.cymru](mailto:polly@peak.cymru) or leave a message for Peak on 01873 811579 and we will call you back.**

# ABERGAVENNY



**H**ow do you keep a show rooted in nostalgia feeling fresh and exciting? Abergavenny Steam Rally has the answer – and this year it arrives on four legs.

OG Performance Horses bring their team of specialist riders and horses to showcase trick riding, dressage and the breathtaking *Airs Above the Ground*. The team has performed across Europe and their horses and riders have appeared in productions including *Napoleon*, *The Winter King*, *Rings of Power*, *House of the Dragon* and *Game of*

*Thrones*. With Spanish horses from the family stud, expect beauty, power and jaw-dropping theatrics. If you're bringing children, OG's spellbinding display will be the highlight of their year.

Returning as firm favourites, the award-winning Gentle Giants Shire Horses are unmissable – in the arena and again on the Sunday morning steam run through the roads surrounding the park. Majestic, unhurried and utterly commanding, these magnificent animals are a living piece of history that will stop you in your tracks.

The steam engines remain the heart of the show. Few visitors will remember when these giants were common on roads, farms and factory floors, powering Britain's industrial age and exported across the world. The dedicated owners who bring them to Bailey Park spend their leisure hours keeping every pipe and rivet polished and every brass fitting gleaming. Unique to our show, you can watch them drive on the main roads along with the shires around the park.



# STEAM RALLY

At the rugby pitch you'll find two hundred or more classic cars from Britain and around the world. Also in the park, classic motorcycles, tractors, commercial vehicles including double-decker buses, leviathan breakdown trucks, lots of lorries and vans, and military vehicles from a bygone error.

Don't overlook the stationary engines, puffing and clanking while their proud owners sit nearby, occasionally stirring to oil these little but essential marvels of engineering glory days.

There's also steam organs, a miniature steamer, a children's area with fair rides galore, a food village, arts and crafts, wood carvers, auto jumble and dozens of stalls selling things you didn't know you couldn't live without. A Welsh love spoon? A steering wheel from a forgotten Jaguar? It's all here.

The arena programme features Shire Horse displays, classic vehicle parades with passionate owners interviewed about their pride and joys, the legendary tug of war – a mighty steam engine against lots of willing kids determined to show their strength. The John Saunders Stage keeps the music going all day, with magic shows for the youngsters and, for the adults, old-time music hall dancers delivering a spectacular high-kicking display.

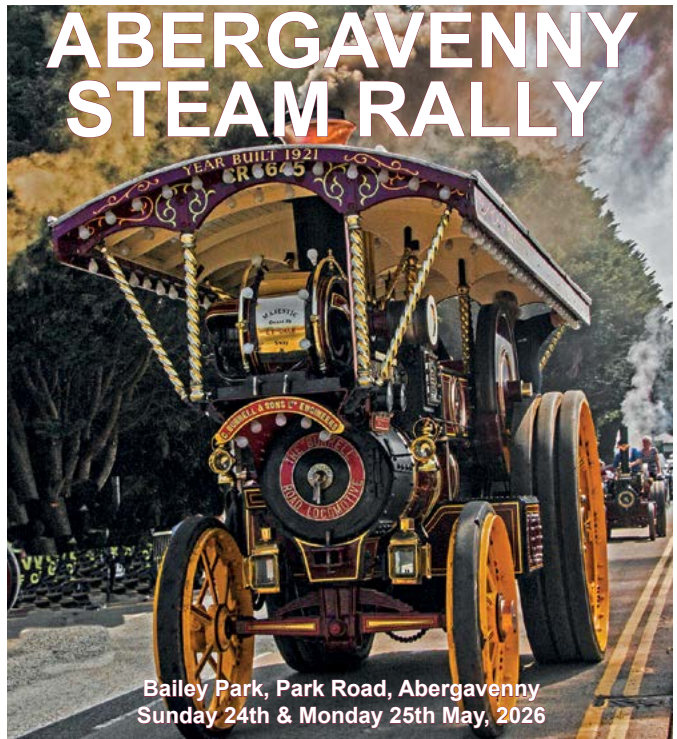
At the bandstand the borough band will sharing the stand with kids street dance groups.

Since Abergavenny Rotary took over the Rally more than 25 years ago, the show has raised hundreds of thousands of pounds. All the money raised going to local charities and worthy causes, with

recent beneficiaries including new motorcycles for Blood Bank Wales, a communications vehicle for Longtown mountain rescue, defibrillators installed throughout the town, and numerous youth activities and sports clubs to mention just a few.

"It makes me very proud to head such a great set of hard working individuals, who turn up year after year to help make the rally such

a success, said Rally Chairman David Tod. "Twenty-five years, a world-class show, with all the money raised helping our local community. That's only possible because of the extraordinary dedication of our Rotarian and non-Rotarian volunteers. It's a family day out, great fun and great value – and every penny goes back where it belongs, into the community."



Bailey Park, Park Road, Abergavenny  
Sunday 24th & Monday 25th May, 2026



For advance tickets scan the QR code,  
visit our Facebook page or  
[www.abergavennysteamrally.co.uk](http://www.abergavennysteamrally.co.uk)

Early Bird Advanced Tickets £10 per adult up to and including Sunday 17 May 2025. Thereafter the Advanced Ticket price will be £12.50 per adult, which is the same as the on the day gate price but saves queuing.

Children under 16 are FREE for all ticket types.



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# Have Your Say on the Future of Brecon's Disused Phone Boxes



*Brecon Town Council is inviting residents, community groups, and local organisations to share their ideas on what should be done with the town's disused phone boxes and how they could be given a new lease of life.*

**O**nce a familiar part of everyday street life, many of these iconic red phone boxes are now no longer in use. Rather than letting them fall into disrepair, the Council is exploring creative ways they could be repurposed for the benefit of the community.

So, what could they become? The possibilities are wide open. Suggestions so far include transforming them into mini libraries, where residents can take or leave books, or installing life-saving community defibrillators. Other ideas include turning them into small green spaces, colourful art displays, or useful community

noticeboards. There is also room for completely new suggestions from the public.

The Council is particularly keen to hear from community groups or organisations who may be interested in adopting and maintaining a phone box in Brecon. This could provide a unique opportunity to create something lasting and meaningful that directly serves local people.

Your feedback will play an important role in shaping which phone boxes could be adopted and how they might be used in future. Whether practical, creative,

or completely unexpected, all ideas are welcome.

Taking part is simple. You can share your views online at: <https://brecontowncouncil.org.uk/consultation-phone-boxes/>

For those who prefer a paper copy, consultation forms are also available to collect from the Guildhall or the Visit Brecon office.

This is a chance for the community to help decide the future of these familiar landmarks, turning forgotten street furniture into something useful, inspiring and uniquely local.

The consultation closes on 26 June 2026, so make sure your voice is heard before the deadline.



# Night of Heart & Harmonies



**T**he North Gwent Cardiac Rehabilitation and Aftercare Charity is hosting a special fundraising concert at Crickhowell's Clarence Hall on Saturday 13 June, and we'd love you to join us!

Our Night of Heart & Harmonies will feature the stirring voices of the Tredegar Orpheus Male Voice Choir and special guests Stephanie Webber and Clara Phillips.

Appearing fresh from a performance at London's Royal Albert Hall, the Tredegar Orpheus have been sharing the joy of male voice harmonies since 1909. Their song book reflects their long history and the power of music to connect people across the generations.

Stephanie Webber, originally from Ebbw Vale, got her big break on TV's *The Voice* back in 2015, when Tom Jones selected her for mentoring. Stephanie has gone on to a stellar career and is currently touring her "Songs from the Heart" show on some of the world's most prestigious cruise ships. Her warm Welsh charm and big, big voice have won her fans around the globe.

Crickhowell High School student Clara Phillips, meanwhile, is just 15, but already a rising star. The Gilwern youngster is one of Crickhowell Choral Society's talented Choral Scholars, and also performs in the fabulous Piano Orchestra of South Wales.

Expect an uplifting evening, with everything from traditional hymns, to musical theatre hits and contemporary classics – plus a few surprises! Doors open at 6:30pm for a 7pm start, and we'll be running a licensed bar throughout the evening.



Tickets cost £12.50 and are available from ticketing platform [zeffy.com](https://www.zeffy.com/); just scan the QR code. Or call 07985 564188.

Proceeds from the evening will help fund the charity's work, providing a weekly programme of community-based cardiac rehab exercise classes for people living with heart conditions across the region. For more info, including our class timetable, go to:

[cardiac-rehab.org.uk](https://cardiac-rehab.org.uk)



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Cardiac Rehabilitation  
& Aftercare Charity

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# Crickhowell Roadworks Underway



**C**rickhowell residents and visitors will have already noticed work getting underway on the A40 as part of a major road improvement project running from late April through to mid-June.

Following the successful completion of Phase 1 in early 2025, attention has now turned to Phase 2 of the works. This next stage focuses on the stretch of road from the zebra crossing near the fire station through to the entrance of the Asda petrol station.

The project has been commissioned by the Welsh Government to address the worsening condition of the road surface and to reduce the need for ongoing repairs in the future. In simple terms, the aim is to create a smoother, safer road for everyone while also improving drainage and pedestrian access along this busy route.

As well as resurfacing the carriageway, several additional improvements are being carried out at the same time. These

include upgrading drainage systems to help prevent water build-up, replacing worn or outdated road signs, improving the zebra crossing near the Bear Hotel and making it easier for pedestrians to cross the road safely with upgraded dropped kerbs at various points along the A40.

The work began on 27th April and is scheduled to run until 19th June 2026, although dates may change slightly depending on conditions.

To help minimise disruption, much of the work is being carried out overnight, typically between 7pm and 7am, when traffic levels are lower. During these times, sections of the A40 will be fully closed, with diversions in place. There will also be some weekend closures, where work will take place both during the day and at night to help speed up progress.

During the daytime, drivers can expect lane closures and temporary traffic lights in certain areas. While every effort is being made to keep Crickhowell

accessible, some delays are inevitable and motorists are advised to allow extra time for their journeys.

Importantly, access to homes and businesses will be maintained throughout the works. In some cases, there may be short delays, but traffic marshals will be made available to assist pedestrians and vehicles safely through the work areas if needed. Delivery drivers will also be accommodated, although arrangements may vary depending on the phase of the work.

Recognising the importance of supporting local businesses, no work will take place during the late May bank holiday period. In addition, one hour of free parking will be available at Beaufort Street Car Park during the project.

Emergency services will continue to have full access at all times and bus services will continue to run during the day, although some delays are expected. Local schools and transport providers have been informed so they can plan accordingly.

While the short-term disruption may be frustrating, these improvements are designed to benefit the whole community in the long run, creating a safer, more reliable road through the heart of Crickhowell.

For more information visit:  
[www.traffic.wales](http://www.traffic.wales)



# WHATS ON

## 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)

## CRICKHOWELL MUSIC FESTIVAL

### 2ND MAY TALGARTH CAR BOOT SALE

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

### 3RD MAY A TASTE OF TALGARTH



An afternoon of ideas, exploration and feasting hosted by Kate Humble. Conversation, walks, feast,

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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*

### 5TH MAY (WEEKLY DURING TERM TIME) BABY & TODDLER GROUP – LLANGORS

A great opportunity to meet parents, carers and grandparents whilst your little ones have some fun.

£2 donation per family. No need to book, just come along at any time during the session.

9:15am-10.30am, Llangors School.

### 7TH MAY

#### Club 33.3 presents: TALK TALK – THE COLOUR OF SPRING

Come and listen to a full vinyl album, no phones, no distractions, new friends! Tickets from £10  
7pm, *The Loft @Book-ish, 18 High St, Crickhowell*

See advert Page 52 for info

### 8TH MAY (AND EVERY FRIDAY)

#### KINDE BABY & TODDLER GROUP

Cuppa, chat, play £3 per session  
9am-11am, *Llangatock Community Hall, Clos Ciliau, Llangatock*

### 12TH MAY

#### CLWB BABYCCINO

Friendly, informal mams and dads meet up.

Ticketed, Free, fortnightly  
11am, *Book-ish, High St, Crickhowell*

See Advert Page 26 for info

### 16TH MAY

#### GROW FOR TALGARTH – PLANT AND PRODUCE SALE

For information email

[growfortalgarth22@gmail.com](mailto:growfortalgarth22@gmail.com)

### 19TH MAY

#### AN EVENING WITH... JON DOYLE



7:30pm, *Book-ish Crickhowell*  
[Book-ish.co.uk/events](http://Book-ish.co.uk/events) for tickets

See advert Page 26 for info

### 22ND – 25TH MAY

#### BRECON BIG FOOD FESTIVAL



Brecon's Big Food Festival takes over the Promenade from 22–25 May, offering a lively bank holiday weekend of street food, live music and riverside relaxation. Visitors can enjoy a handpicked selection of global food traders, fully stocked bars and a welcoming, community-focused atmosphere. Family- and dog-friendly, the event invites everyone to unwind outdoors, enjoy great food and entertainment, and make the most of one of Brecon's standout spring events.

*All day free event. Brecon Promenade*

See Page 17 for more info

### 24TH & 25TH MAY

#### ABERGAVENTNY STEAM RALLY



Abergavenny Steam Rally blends nostalgia with excitement through spectacular new and returning

attractions. OG Performance Horses deliver thrilling equestrian displays, while Gentle Giants Shire Horses and working steam engines celebrate living history. Visitors can enjoy classic vehicles, arena entertainment, fair rides, and artisan stalls. Run by Abergavenny Rotary, the event raises vital funds for local charities, making it a fun, family-friendly day out with a strong community purpose.

*10am-6pm daily, Bailey Park, Abergavenny*

See article on Page 8 for more info

### 26TH MAY

#### AN EVENING WITH... ROB COWEN

7:30pm, *Book-ish Crickhowell*  
[Book-ish.co.uk/events](http://Book-ish.co.uk/events) for tickets

See advert Page 52 for info

### 6TH JUNE

#### ABERGAVENTNY ARTS FESTIVAL

An inclusive community arts festival – free admission, free drop-in workshops, activities and performances.

*All day event, Abergavenny Castle*

### 13TH JUNE

#### NIGHT OF HEART AND HARMONIES

Charity fundraising concert.

6:30pm, *Clarence Hall, Crickhowell*

See Page 12 for information and tickets

## SHARE YOUR EVENTS

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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# Big Food Festival Comes to Brecon Promenade This May Bank Holiday

**B**recon is set to come alive this Late May Bank Holiday as the Big Food Festival takes over the Promenade from 22nd to 25th May, bringing a full weekend of street food, live music and riverside atmosphere to the heart of town.

Visitors can expect a carefully curated selection of some of the best street food traders around, serving up bold flavours and freshly prepared dishes from across the globe. This isn't your standard festival food line-up; each trader is handpicked to ensure quality, variety and something a little different for everyone. From indulgent comfort food to vibrant international cuisine, there will be plenty to explore over the four days.

Alongside the food, the festival will feature fully stocked bars offering a range of drinks, making it easy to relax and enjoy the riverside setting. Live music will run throughout the weekend, adding to the laidback, feel-good atmosphere.

The Big Food Festival is designed to be a social, community-focused event, perfect for families, groups of friends and anyone looking to make the most of the bank holiday. It is also dog-friendly, so four-legged visitors are welcome to join in the fun.

Set against the scenic backdrop of Brecon Promenade, the event offers the ideal opportunity to enjoy good food, great entertainment and time outdoors in a relaxed setting.

Whether you're coming for the

food, the music, or simply a day out by the river, the Big Food Festival promises something for everyone. Visitors are encouraged to bring family and friends, arrive hungry and make a day - or a full weekend - of it.

Free tickets are available now, and with four days of food, drink and entertainment lined up, it's set to be one of Brecon's standout events this spring.

Entry details as follows  
22nd-25th May, Brecon Promenade. Free Entry.



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# Has your business suffered from the effects of pollution in the rivers Wye, Lugg or Usk?

**M**ore than 4,000 individuals and local businesses have joined the biggest ever group legal action to be brought over UK environmental pollution. The claim, led by leading law firm Leigh Day, alleges that excessive phosphorus from the spreading of chicken manure by the Avara Foods Poultry Group (which includes Avara Foods Limited and Freemans of Newent) as well as sewage from works by Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water, are the main causes of pollution affecting the rivers.

The major action, issued at the High Court, was prompted by changes to the Wye, its tributaries including the Lugg,

and the Usk, with alleged impacts on wildlife, recreation and the livelihood of business owners. A growing number of business owners across the Wye, Lugg and Usk catchments are joining forces in a landmark legal action, as environmental damage continues. Those who have joined include people from your local area and small businesses reliant on tourists such as bed and breakfasts and other hospitality businesses, people with AirBNBs, and swimming or fishing businesses.

The claim is led by Leigh Day partner Oliver Holland. He said: "If the claim succeeds it could bring real change. Some people just want to protect their rivers, and the claim could help

stop the pollution and clean up the rivers. Other people and businesses have suffered serious financial losses, and the claim could help put them back where they would have been if the rivers weren't polluted."

The claim is open for other business owners to join. To join the legal action or to find out more, visit <https://www.leighday.co.uk/our-services/group-claims/river-wye-claim/> or scan the QR code



## Your business shouldn't pay the price for pollution.

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LAWYERS AGAINST INJUSTICE

# May Weather Outlook

by Jonathan Powell

As we edge into the final month of spring, May whilst generally still fairly unsettled, should at least furnish us with some decent temperatures. Following on from a changeable April that gave us some significant temperature swings in very short periods of time, May looks set to start with showers or longer spells of rain, mixed in with some sunshine. Temperatures are expected to be rather flat with high pressure struggling to establish itself. By the mid-May, there would appear to be a shift toward a more stable period of weather and it's here that the month will have its chance to shine, with better conditions seeing a decent upward trend in temperatures, albeit for a relatively curtailed period. With high pressure there or thereabouts, the trend for the remainder of the month would appear to be in favour of the settled conditions continuing, although not without some intervention from showers. Temperatures for the final week or so of May looking not as responsive as they could be. May looks set to return an average or slighter wetter than average month, with temperatures above the average.

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I give conscious, careful and attentive massage, offered in a calm and respectful space where you can slow down, switch off, and reconnect with yourself. Each session is guided by your comfort and boundaries. There is no set routine and no expectation to be or feel a certain way - definitely no need to perform. Instead, I focus on creating a space where you can relax deeply, feel supported, and experience a sense of ease and

confidence in your body—often in a way that's hard to find elsewhere.

Alongside individual sessions for women, I can also offer couples massage together with my wife (an experienced practitioner herself), creating a shared experience where both partners can unwind together and feel held in a safe, nurturing environment. For couples looking to deepen their connection, we offer gentle, down-to-earth intimacy coaching, supporting communication, trust, and a more relaxed, natural closeness—always at your own pace.

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This work is particularly suited to women who are feeling stressed, overwhelmed, or disconnected, and who are looking for time and space to reset. And it's for women who are



missing caring, conscious touch, for any reason. It's also for couples who want to slow down, reconnect, and enjoy a more present, comfortable connection with each other.

Do you have questions? I'll be happy to have an informal chat to see if it feels right for you.

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# The Thought Police

*“You don’t need to interact with the mind. You don’t need to do anything. Just be the one who notices.”*

~ Michael A Singer



**L**et’s try something new this month, shall we? How about we leave our thinking alone? As in, don’t get involved with it at all.

Sounds a bit irresponsible, doesn’t it? Especially when you’re told—by me, here!—that thought creates your reality; and there are books and blogs and all manner of social media encouraging you to ‘manage your mindset’, and ‘stay on top of your mental game’.

Mental health treatments, too, like CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy), encourage awareness of thoughts, in order to challenge, and modify, those considered negative or irrational.

But give this subjective instruction to a chronic over-thinker, and you’ve just added even *more* to their checklist of mental tasks, not to mention giving them an opportunity to ‘fail’ at taking their mental health into their own hands.

That doesn’t seem altogether *kind*, to me, and if our end goal is to get stuff off our minds and enjoy what life has to offer in the here and now, it also seems a little counter-productive. Because surely, the only tool we have at our disposal to manage thought is... more thought?

I worked with a client once whose job had a regular task that got them all up in their head. They were plagued with insecurity about it - not being good enough, making mistakes and the like - and they noticed that every now and again, when they were in a lighter mood, they were able to rationalise that they weren’t so bad at it after all.

Which seems better, doesn’t it? Almost like it’s putting the mind in its place: *Hey, be off with you, and all your bad vibes – I call the shots round here!*

But look a little closer and you’ll see that ‘rationalising’ is just more of the same. It’s pouring thought-fuel onto an already raging fire of over-analysis.

By engaging thought on its own terms - trying to out-positive all its negativity - my client was innocently, inevitably, strengthening its hold over them, and keeping the cycle of insecurity alive.

A simple rule of thumb is that thought will continue to trouble us, for just as long as we see it as troublesome. Which is why your best bet could be to just let the mind get on with whatever it’s doing, and not get involved.

To aid you in this novel quest, it’s worth remembering what you do whenever you have the misfortune to bruise yourself. We’ve been gifted these amazing bodies that miraculously heal themselves, so you know as well as I do, that you don’t go prodding it, hoping to speed up the process. Not only would that hurt, but in tinkering with it, you’d be getting in the way, and actually making it worse.

‘Bruised’ thought is just another part of this same, self-healing system: it arises, it’s a thing for a while, and then it resolves, without intervention. If you go prodding around in there - monitoring, judging, cajoling, bemoaning - not only will it hurt, but you’re just prolonging the agony. As, I’m sure you’ll agree, experience bears out.

The greatest irony I find in this merry dance of meta-cognition (i.e. thinking about our thinking) is that both the notion of *needing* to manage your thoughts, and the belief in some sort of ‘better’ version of you that’s busy *doing* all that managing, are themselves... just more thought.

This could well be the first new thing you’ve tried that requires nothing from ‘you’ at all.

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# Exploring the Hidden Delights of Cwm Onneu Fach

BY KEVIN WALKER

ILLUSTRATION BY PETE HILL

A simple stroll of about 4kms with 50 metres of ascent. Allow 2 hours including exploration time! Some of the paths are rough and muddy.

*Cwm Onneu Fach is a hidden gem of a valley, nestling below the imposing Llangattock Escarpment and not visible from any road. Much of it lies within the Craig y Cilau National Nature Reserve. One can happily spend a whole day here, just exploring, and this simple walk is a great introduction to the area.*

1 The walk starts from the cattle grid on the mountain road between Llangattock and Beaufort (NGR 185168). Follow the track opposite the rough parking area to reach a gate, and turn right along a muddy path with the fence to your left, soon descending to reach an information board at the start of the Craig y Cilau National Nature Reserve.

2 The slightly dome-shaped area below you is Waun Ddu – a perched bog. Many interesting plants grow here, including Bronze Water Mint, Sundews, Arum Lily, and Brooklime.



Either cross the bog or follow the path past an old limekiln and around the right side of the bog to reach a wood. This path is rough to start, but rapidly improves. At the far side of the bog, continue along the path with the wood to your left. Ignore paths to the right – just keep close to the old wall to your left, descending steadily into the wild valley.

3 Shortly after a brief, steep descent around a large tree, the valley becomes more open. To your left at this point is a bridge stile.



If you cross this and turn left you can shorten the route if you wish, (purple route on the map) but you'll be missing the most interesting and picturesque parts of the walk! So, keep going along the obvious if sometimes rough path with increasingly impressive views ahead, eventually reaching another Nature Reserve sign. There is a lot of nature interest along this section... not just flowers, but ferns, mosses, and fungi, as well as reptiles, birds and small mammals.



4 A short distance past the sign, turn left and cross the stream on stepping stones to reach a gate.

4



Eglwys faen



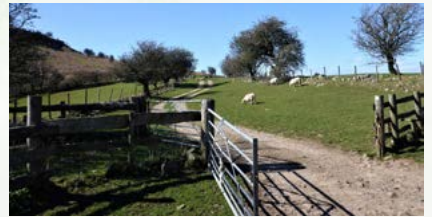
Go through the gate and turn left along a wide, grassy path leading past a small weir (part of a mini-hydro scheme), then stroll easily through the delightful valley with impressive views of the Llangattock Escarpment ahead and to your left.



Continue to a yellow-topped post where the bridge stile mentioned earlier can be seen on the left.



**5** Go straight ahead on the path alongside the stream, and another yellow-topped post is soon obvious on the skyline ahead. Follow the path around this to reach a gap in the wall, then continue across a small field to a gate. Go straight ahead across a larger field to a muddy area where an obvious track leads up to the right, soon reaching an open area where a wide track on the left leads back to the start.



Kevin Walker Mountain Activities is based in Crickhowell, offering courses & walks, coaching & guiding, writing & photography.  
[www.mountain-activities.com](http://www.mountain-activities.com)

# BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

*This month, our bookseller friends at Book-ish are encouraging us to try something new with a selection of cool and fascinating books designed to inspire curiosity and discovery.*

## Discover...Translated Fiction!

*Hooked*

**Asako Yuzuki**

£14.99

Eriko appears to have a perfect life: devoted parents, a pristine apartment, and a high-flying job in the seafood division of a major Japanese trading company. Her ambitious project to reintroduce Nile perch into the Japanese market reflects her drive, yet beneath the surface she is consumed by loneliness. She becomes captivated by Shōko, a housewife who writes a popular blog about messy homes and convenience-store food, far removed from idealised domestic life. When they meet, a friendship begins, but Eriko's fascination soon turns into obsession. How far will she go to keep her closest connection? Beautifully translated by Polly Barton, *Hooked* is a darkly compelling exploration of food, identity and womanhood in modern Japan.



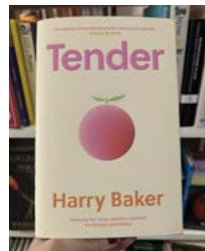
## Discover... Poetry!

*Tender*

**Harry Baker**

£14.99

*Tender* is the hilarious and heart-warming new poetry collection from World Poetry Slam Champion Harry Baker, exploring fatherhood for the first time. It captures the fragile, magical moments of new life and early parenthood, from sleepless nights to quiet wonder. With his trademark wit and warmth, Baker reflects on the first 100 days with his son as they get to know each other. Parents will recognise themselves in these snapshots of love, exhaustion and everyday tenderness.



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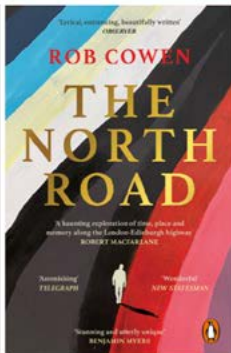
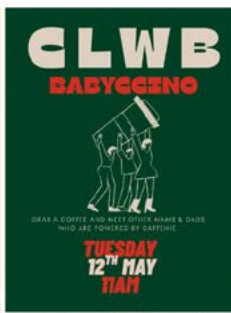
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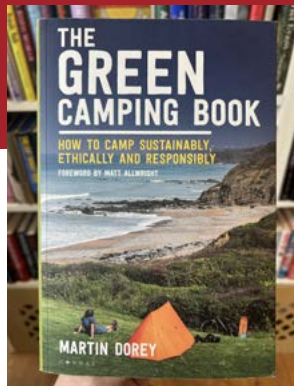


### Discover a new...Sport!

*Start Where You Are – The Beginner's 5k Running Guide for Women*

**Sabrina Pace-Humphreys**  
£16.99

Want to take up running but have no idea where to begin? Consider this book your personal cheerleader - a motivating and practical beginner's guide designed for women to take you from your couch to your first 5k in just 10 weeks. It combines friendly expert coaching with inclusive real runners' stories and advice for every woman, at every stage of life. Includes an easy to follow, 10-week training plan to get you to 5k; technique and safety advice; strength and conditioning exercises to support your running; advice on running through your menstrual cycles and menopause; expert nutrition advice, health tips and motivational ideas to keep you on your running journey.

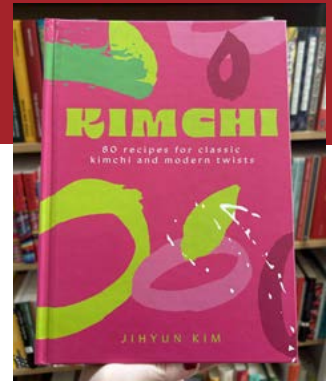


### Discover a new...Activity!

*The Green Camping Book*  
**Martin Dorey**

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From lifelong camper, campervanner and environmentalist Martin Dorey comes a practical manifesto for greener, more responsible camping. With climate change affecting everyone, this book encourages campers to recognise their role in protecting the natural spaces they love. It offers clear guidance on making more sustainable choices, from kit and clothing to travel, campsites and everyday habits outdoors. Rather than asking people to stop exploring, it shows how to do so with a lighter footprint. Aimed at those who want to reduce their environmental impact but aren't sure where to start, it's a call to get outdoors, enjoy nature and take meaningful steps to preserve it for the future.



### Discover a new...Skill!

*Kimchi - 80 Recipes for classic kimchi and modern twists*

**Jihyun Kim**  
£20

Bring the heart and soul of kimchi into your kitchen with a collection of authentic, classic recipes alongside modern, creative ways to use this beloved fermented dish in everyday cooking. This beautiful cookbook explores the craft of kimchi through traditional seasonal methods and inspiring dishes that show just how versatile it can be. From Kimchi Grilled Cheese Sandwich and Kimchi Mac and Cheese to Kimchi Quesadillas, Summer Rolls and Stir-Fried Kimchi Udon with Greens, there are endless ways to enjoy its bold, tangy flavour. This book blends old and new, helping you connect more deeply with cooking while discovering fresh, exciting ways to use kimchi every day.



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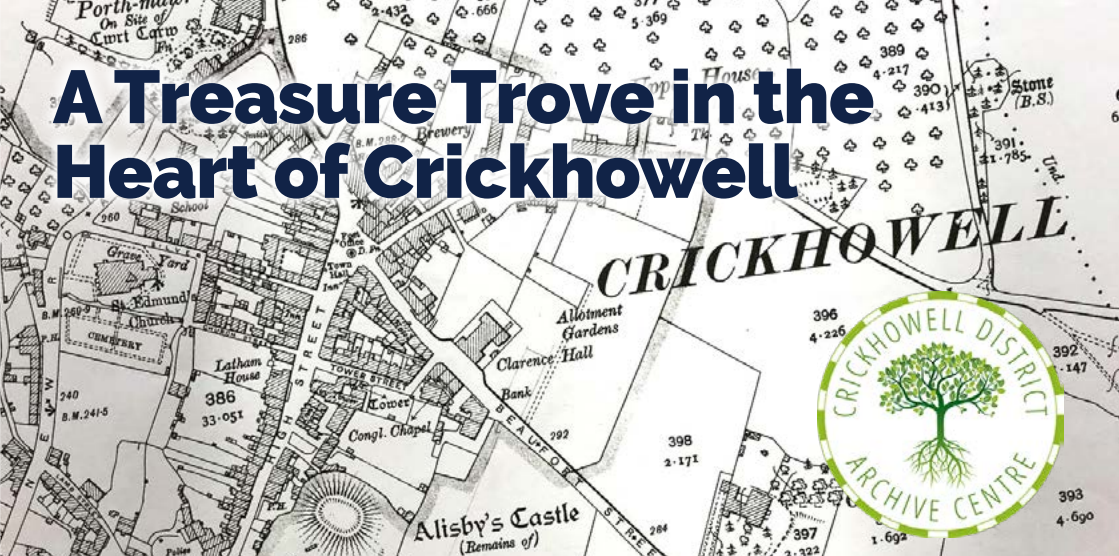
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# A Treasure Trove in the Heart of Crickhowell



**A** treasure trove can be found in two small rooms at the rear of the first floor of the Crickhowell Resource and Information Centre. This is the Crickhowell District Archive Centre—a volunteer-run charity that preserves and provides access to a huge collection of documents, records, maps and images related to the parishes that make up the old Crickhowell Rural District Council area. It is an unusual gem—an archive made by locals, run entirely by volunteers, funded entirely by grants, donations and the sales of its publications.



For over two decades, visitors have come from all over the country, and indeed the world, looking for information about their ancestors. Newly arrived residents of the area request help researching their house's history. And our volunteers have built a body of knowledge and experience to answer even the

most difficult of queries, sending visitors away with documents, images, directions to houses and graveyards. Above all, the centre and its volunteers enrich their visitors' experience in the local area. As one visitor recently told us 'I had no idea what to expect. The experience was much much better than the programme Who do you think you are!'



For many people, their first encounter with the centre is through one of our books. Over the past decade the centre has published several titles including our best-selling Crickhowell High Street Across the Decades by Ryland Wallace and John Webb. Their latest book—Post-war Crickhowell, 1945–1970—was published in early May. For the social history enthusiast there is Crickhowell 1881, a year in the life of the town. A History of Llangattock is an eclectic collection of articles and photographs providing a picture

of the village and surrounding hills during the 19th and 20th centuries. Great Houses of Crickhowell is an authoritative account of five estates in the area including Glanus and Dan y Parc. The centre also has a Friends supporter programme with a newsletter published twice a year. You can order books, become a Friend and send in queries through our website:

[crickhowellarchives.org.uk](http://crickhowellarchives.org.uk)

We are always looking for volunteers who want to get more involved. Our volunteers help out in the office, carry out research of all kinds for clients, write and produce the bi-annual newsletter, catalogue donations, work on our oral history project, manage the Friends programme and serve as trustees. Are you interested in history? Would you like to help others research their family or house history? Do you have a passion for old photographs? Can you decipher handwriting and love reading historic documents?

Why not drop by and start your exploration of the Crickhowell area's fascinating past, upstairs in CrIC, Beaufort Street on Monday, Thursday and Friday morning, Tuesday afternoon. Or by appointment (email us). [info@crickhowellarchives.org.uk](mailto:info@crickhowellarchives.org.uk)

Eliane Wigzell

NEXT MONTH'S FOCUS

# The Local Advice Issue



We're uncovering what to look for when choosing a tradesperson, from the truth behind cheap quotes to the costly mistakes customers often make and how to get it right from the start.

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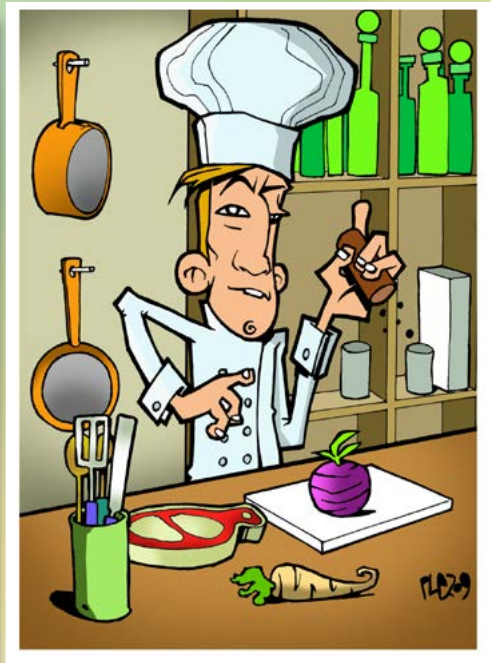
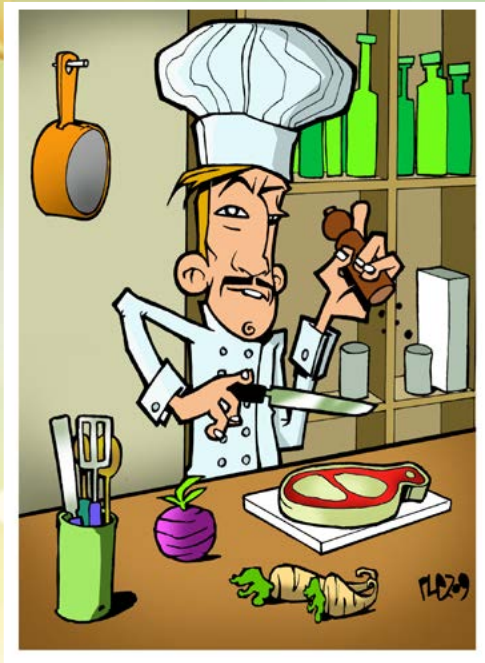
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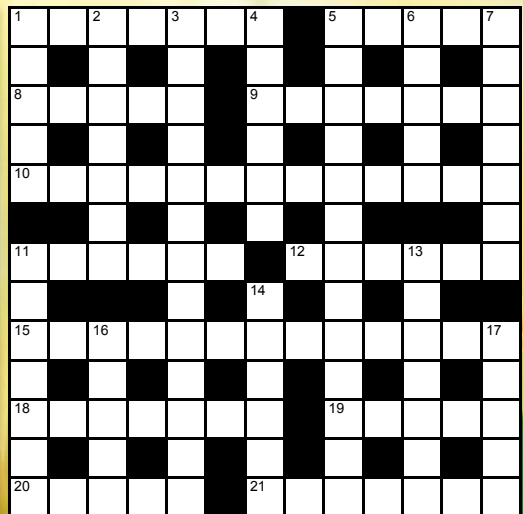
## Quick Crossword

### ACROSS

1. Sketch (7)
- 5 Naval map (5)
- 8 Expel (5)
- 9 Woman's holdall (7)
- 10 Promotional literature (13)
- 11 Informal (6)
- 12 Thick-set (6)
- 15 Used to cool food (13)
- 18 Conclusions (7)
- 19 Perfect (5)
- 20 Sea rising and falling (5)
- 21 Medicinal syrup (7)

### DOWN

- 1 Musical drama (5)
- 2 Robbers (7)
- 3 Worldwide (13)
- 4 Pertaining to cultural group (6)
- 5 Deep thinking (13)
- 6 Saunter (5)
- 7 Firmly (7)
- 11 Right (7)
- 13 Nearest (7)
- 14 Receptacle (6)
- 16 Dimmed (5)
- 17 Bottom of the feet (5)



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