

Hay Post Box 2027



Topper calendar

January

Delivering the goods

Somebody has to handle all those parcels, particularly with so many sales in January. Thank god for all our local friendly local delivery men and women, particularly in the winter.

In Victorian times the Royal Mail delivered letters to your door in Hay as they do today, but they did not carry goods. The coach companies would often take small parcels for a charge, but most of the carrying of goods was done by local firms of carriers who would charge a fee for taking goods in their carts. John Price and James Meredith were local men who took goods to Brecon and Hereford on different days.

If there is one thing we learned during Covid it is that the real heroes in this world are the ones who deliver our mail, keep our local shops open, and keep our water, gas and electricity flowing.



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February

Love is in the air...

As we begin to emerge from winter the true nature of Hay as a place for lovers becomes apparent, and you certainly won't have a problem finding the odd romantic novel even if you have to take shelter from the Welsh weather in a cosy bar or coffee shop from time to time.

The Spanish equivalent of Valentine's Day in Barcelona (Saint Jordi) sees a tradition where women give men books and men give women flowers, although in this day and age it works both ways 'round. On this one day it is estimated half a million books are bought as gifts!

As for Cupid - well look no further than the gold post box at the top of Newport Street!



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March

St David's Day

March is a month for celebrating Hay's Welshness, and with St David's day taking place on March 1st it is a great time to buy yourself a book about local history and celebrate the town's origins and modern pride in all things Cymru.

St David is famed for being adopted by a dove and as he was standing addressing the masses in the open air, a hill rose beneath him to give him a place to preach from.

Welsh kings adopted the red dragon as a symbol of power and authority back in the 5th Century but nowadays we're all a bit more chilled, so this smiling fella with a giant leek, surrounded by Daffodils, certainly isn't breathing fire. Apart from anything else it would make the postman's job far too tricky ...



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April

Rebirth

Although Easter actually falls at the end of March in 2027 the month of April is seen as the time of spring and new beginnings, so the Easter bunny and her eggs are pictured here in traditional pose. And lets be honest, there will be plenty of chocolate still being eaten.

It is also time for the return of Hay's monthly Saturday markets, which is a sure sign of better weather and longer days.

But this year April really is special as the first of the month sees the 50th Anniversary of Richard Booth declaring Hay an independent kingdom with himself as monarch, something celebrated with a sculpture in the castle gardens. Although it was a tongue-in-cheek project - started on April Fool's Day - it also symbolises Hay's proud status as a unique border town



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May

Festivals!

For ten days over the late May holiday period the old Dairy Meadows hosts an event of international renown which over the years has seen everything from famous writers and artists to ex US presidents in attendance. There are various stories about how it started - including one which claims it was initially funded from the winnings of a poker game - but there is no doubt that the inaugural event was held in 1988, which means that next year it will be celebrating its fiftieth year.

Over the first weekend there is also HowTheLightGetsIn, a marriage of profound philosophical debate, live music, and comedy that creates an intellectually stimulating yet relaxed atmosphere.

And between the two festival sites is Hay itself - providing a unique welcoming environment for visitors.



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June

Birds

Hay's charm is built on a number of factors besides the obvious ones of its reputation as a book town and the annual festival. Chief amongst these are its glorious countryside, the winding River Wye, the quirkiness of its buildings, and the friendliness of its inhabitants

Hay is also home to a considerable body of bird life. Dozens of species have been recorded locally - swans, Egrets, Heron, Duck and Geese can be seen on the River Wye. Robins, Blue Tits, Chaffinch and Wrens are common. Woodpeckers can be heard in wooded areas and jackdaws and swallows flock in large groups at this time of year. Nocturnal birds like Tawny Owls and Barn Owls spend the daytime dozing in tree trunks, but perk up when the moon starts to shine.

Occasionally gulls find their way inland too so heed this advice and keep your chips securely wrapped!



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July

Gardeners World

By July Hay is in full bloom, but many of its gardens are hidden away behind the old stone walls that give the town its charm and character. Occasionally a garden gnome will escape this habitat and can be seen in the town centre like this one.

The most famous gardener associated with the area is Monty Don. While his iconic garden, Longmeadow, is located just across the border in Herefordshire, he has lived in the area for over 30 years and famously cites Hay Bluff—the sheer cliff towering over Hay-on-Wye—as his favourite view and country walk.

As the long-term lead presenter of BBC's *Gardeners' World*, his organic philosophy and local wildflower meadow restoration projects are deeply tied to the Welsh Marches landscape.



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August

Kick-off time!

Scrape the mud off those boots and get ready for a new season. As a border town Hay embraces both football and Rugby but Hay St Marys FC holds a special place in local affections.

In 2025-26 the senior team won the Mid Wales South League Title in style, due in no small measure to the fantastic support they get at the Forest Road ground. But there is also a women's team and a big emphasis on inclusive youth development for both boys and girls.

This shot commemorates Filip "Fil Wiz" Wisniewski who was a beloved community icon and former manager of Hay St Mary's. Following his passing in December 2023, his funeral was held in January 2024, and the community established the annual Fil Wiz Festival to honour his deep dedication to local football



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September

Back to school

Much to the relief of parents!

Schooling in Hay began to take formal shape following the English Civil War. A Welsh Trust school was established in Hay-on-Wye around 1662. Later, in 1770, benefactor William Pennoyre left provisions in his will to support the instruction of local boys.

But most children did not go to school at the start of Queen Victoria's reign. The children of the poor had to go to work as soon as they were old enough to earn money for the family.

The mid-19th century saw expansion through the National Society under the guidance of local vicar Rev. William L. Bevan (re-established in 1845). A British school (infants department) and an Edward Goff-funded school (held in the Baptist meeting house) were also established in the 1840s

By the end of the Victorian period free schools were provided and it became compulsory for all children to go to school.



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October

Mushroom madness

Watch out this month for the annual Fungi Festival which tells stories of the fantastic power and beauty of mushrooms and their many uses in food and medicine (or even - given that Halloween falls in this month - magic potions?). Expect the town's shops to go all out with window displays, and for the pubs, cafes and restaurants to produce food and drink that will blow your taste buds away.

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November

Lest we forget

After the establishment of the Royal British Legion nationally in 1921, the Hay-on-Wye branch was created to support local servicemen, veterans, and their families in the wake of the First World War and subsequent conflicts.

After the local branch building fell into a state of disrepair, veteran and dedicated member Kelvyn Jenkins spearheaded an extensive community effort to restore and save the premises. Volunteers donated skills, time, and materials to bring the facility back to life.

Today, the restored hub at Market Street operates as a vibrant community centre. It hosts regular activities including monthly Tea & Chat sessions, Saturday evening Bingo nights with cash prizes and a bar, 1940s-themed tea parties supporting the Poppy Appeal, beginner photography workshops, and organised coach trips to the National Memorial Arboretum.



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December

He's making a list ...

Christmas in Hay is a magical time. While many know it for its sun-drenched summer literature festival, the true, nostalgic heart of the town emerges when winter sets in, the Black Mountains are dusted with snow, and the cozy smell of woodsmoke fills the air

The Victorian Clock Tower was built in 1881, and stood for years as an empty shell, affectionately dubbed by locals as the "clockless tower". Through community fundraising, the clock faces and the heavy memorial bell were finally installed and officially set ticking for the very first time on Christmas Day, 1884. For generations of residents, the chiming of that clock has been intrinsically tied to the magic of Christmas morning

Today Christmas markets and events run throughout the month right up to Christmas Eve itself. And thanks to its astonishing array of small shops there is always somewhere to get a last minute present.



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About this calendar

This calendar would not be possible without the incredible effort of Reet Prendergast (pictured) who has been crocheting / knitting her wonderful creations since xxx. They have become a local institution and people look forward to them each month. Previous years have seen the wedding of King Charles and Queen Camilla, characters from Gavin and Stacy, and even (as you can see) a goldfish bowl full of fish

Hay's history, buildings, culture and events make it unique but the essence of it is its people, who build the community in so many ways - keeping the wonderful shops, pubs and cafes attractive; running everything from food banks to book clubs; organising the summer show; undertaking clean-ups, or looking after the river, the Warren and the rest of the environment; fundraising for better facilities - the list goes on and on. Thank you to everyone who makes this a special community, however great or small your effort.

All profits from this calendar go to supporting local community projects, particularly the "Light Up Hay" event in December. If you would like to be involved in next year's calendar (the theme for which has yet to be decided) please contact Justin Dix on jdix1958@gmail.com.

