

Pembrokeshire Life

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What's on in July

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Once they were notorious for stoning strangers, but the villagers of Llangwm have mellowed to the extent of organising a literature festival

Literary Llangwm

LLANGWM launches its first ever literary festival next month with a fascinating selection of literary highlights, including talks, discussions, workshops and readings by writers, famous and not yet famous.

"I am amazed at the calibre and stature of some of the writers who have agreed to come to the festival," said organiser Michael Pugh. "We have some serious talent."

"And at the same time, we want to nurture talent that has not yet been discovered, which is why we are running quite a lot of creative writing workshops and also sessions such as Poems and Pints and a kind of 'open mike' for prose and poems, to get the creative juices flowing."

The festival, which runs from August 12 to 14, has attracted some well-known writers with Pembrokeshire connections.

Griff Rhys Jones explores his sense of Welsh identity and the land of his aunts; Ferdinand Mount will look at mutiny, money and marriage in India from a very personal viewpoint, while son Harry Mount will be taking a trip through Ancient Greece in the footsteps of Odysseus.

Events will be taking place in the village pub (The Cottage), the village hall, the rugby club, and in a marquee that will be provided by event sponsors Valero.

"And the Baptist chapel will serve bacon rolls, tea and coffee in the schoolroom on the Friday and Saturday mornings, while various other refreshments will be available on site during the festival," said Michael.

For a first-time festival, the calibre and variety of writers booked to talk is truly impressive. Author and expert on Russia Dr Bobo Lo will examine the resurgence of the Kremlin under Putin and the emasculation of the West, while Anne Lauppe-Dunbar will revisit East Germany for a chilling murder mystery and tales of a regime that systematically doped its best athletes to superhero status.

Historian David Horspool will delve into the Byzantine intrigues of royal rivals, Richard III and Henry Tudor, while Diana Darke – an Arabic-speaking woman born in the Gower – will talk of her restoration of a Damascus town-house and the genesis of today's crisis in Syria.

Among other visiting speakers will be Jerwood-winning Gothic novelist Jo Mazelis, historian Nick Taylor and Rachel Mann who will recount Elsie Shuffelbottom's attempts to reclaim *The Book of Providence* and decipher the mysteries of its blank pages.

Ben Rawlence will be describing nine lives from Dadaab, the world's largest refugee camp, while local author, Pamela Hunt will be recounting the hilarious adventures of Miss Daisy, her vintage Austin.



Talking heads... Clockwise from above: Ferdinand Mount, Anne Lauppe-Dunbar and Jo Mazelis.



Meanwhile Caerphilly-born author Tom Morris will be reading from his vivid collection of short stories *We Don't Know What We're Doing*.

In addition, there will be bilingual writing competitions for children (Welsh and English), workshops on creative writing for children and adults, and discussions about strategies for getting work published.

"While we obviously hope the usual customers of literary festivals will attend, we'd like to pass on the message that literature and music is for all," stressed Michael.

"So our festival will include initiatives to encourage everyone to come – for example, residents of care homes for the elderly, people who have learning difficulties and people who would just like to find out more."

"Generally, our pricing for tickets is designed to encourage people from all walks of life to attend and we are planning – with the help of sponsors – to run some free events."

AS WELL as the literary aspect, there will be plenty of other activities taking place in the village over the course of the festival.

Paintings by local artists will be on sale at the festival site, while local musicians will be performing a variety of music, including songs in Medieval Flemish to celebrate the Flemish communities of south Pembrokeshire.

And there will also be 'Come Forage with Me' walks around the fields and hedgerows and along the Cleddau Estuary.

"We are still hoping to attract more sponsors, in addition to Valero, and would be happy to consider any authors whose voice is at present not included in the festival," said Michael.

For more information on the festival contact llangwmlit-fest@gmail.com, call 07970 812050 or go to www.llangwmlit-fest.co.uk.