



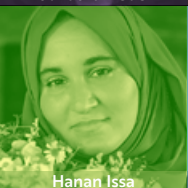
Monty LitFest 2025

6–8 June

Celebrating writing from Wales,
the Borders and beyond



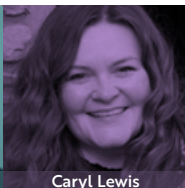
Jonathan Coe



Hanan Issa



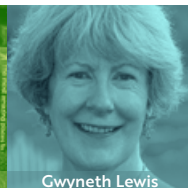
Jon Savage



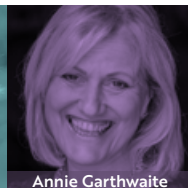
Caryl Lewis



Mike Parker



Gwyneth Lewis



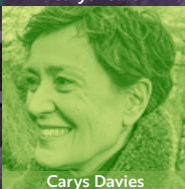
Annie Garthwaite



Owen Staton



Jon Gower



Caryl Davies



Angharad Price



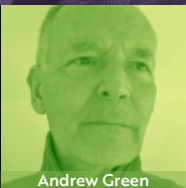
Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones



Rhian E Jones



Stephen Alford



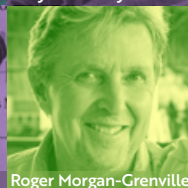
Andrew Green



Marcus Berkmann



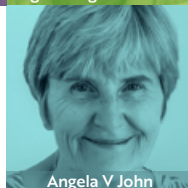
Rhys Mwyn



Roger Morgan-Grenville



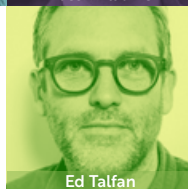
Matthew Yeomans



Angela V John



Russ Williams



Ed Talfan



Gŵyl Llen Maldwyn

6–8 Mehefin 2025

Dathlu llen o Gymru,
y Gororau a thu hwnt



WELCOME TO OUR EIGHTH ANNUAL MONTY LIT FEST – AND WHAT’S NEW

Our roots are firmly planted in our love of history and nature. The stories of the people of Wales and its borderlands. Now we have new shoots!

Read on to discover more about the new Jill Kibble Monty Mini Fest (page 30), Montgomeryshire’s new literary festival for children.

We have our first film screening, *Mr Burton*, following a session with the biographer of Richard Burton’s great inspiration – his schoolteacher.

Another first as we become the event of choice for an official book launch. The Penguin paperback of *The King’s Mother*, the *Times Book of the Month*, goes public on Sunday.

And in a new partnership, we’re offering two free writing workshops in collaboration with the University of Aberystwyth.

As well as borders, the power of the sea plays a big role in this year’s programme. Power is a running theme through much of this year’s writing; from empires to behind domestic doors, from rebellions to the natural world.

Award-winning fiction, two national poets, our music writing Late Lounge and the famous Big Quiz. All wrapped up in street music, food, art, cake and a wonderful welcome in historic Montgomery.

Though we be little we are fierce!

VISITING MONTGOMERY

The historic town of Montgomery lies in the Welsh Marches, ideally placed for visitors from all directions. Monty Lit Fest is centred around Montgomery’s Town Hall, together with a range of other venues throughout the town. For more information about local accommodation, where to eat and drink and the many other things Montgomery and Montgomeryshire have to offer, take a look at the Montgomery Wales (montgomery-wales.co.uk) and the Visit Mid Wales (visitmidwales.co.uk) websites.

VENUE INFORMATION

The main venue for the event is the Town Hall which has access for visitors with restricted mobility. There are toilets (one has wheelchair access) on site. Refreshments will be served on the ground floor of the Town Hall on both Saturday and Sunday.

BOOKSHOPS

Visitors to Monty Lit Fest 2025 can buy books from not one, but two, local booksellers. Oswestry’s Booka Bookshop (bookabookshop.co.uk) will be running a pop-up bookshop at Montgomery Town Hall during the festival. Montgomery is also home to The Bookshop Montgomery, staunch supporters of the Festival in the local community.

KEEP IN TOUCH

Follow us on social media @MontyLitFest for all our latest news. For more information or press passes please e-mail enquiries@montylitfest.com.





FEATURING...

SAIRAH AHSAN



Sairah Ahsan is a writer, scientist and researcher living on the Welsh coast. She is currently working on a novel about the places that we imagine and the homes which fall short. Her work has found a home with *Extra Teeth*, *Nawr*, *Poetry Wales*, *Lucent Dreaming*, and *Ink Sweat & Tears* under the alias Rakyah Assam.

STEPHEN ALFORD



Stephen Alford is an historian and academic, currently professor of Early Modern British History at the University of Leeds. He previously taught for fifteen years at Cambridge University, where he was a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of History and a Fellow of King's College. Stephen is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and the author of several books, including *The Watchers: A Secret History of the Reign of Elizabeth* and *All His Spies: The Secret World of Robert Cecil*.

ADAM BEDFORD



Adam Bedford has studied and worked in and around agriculture for the past 20 years. In his day job he represents and advises farmers, and in his spare time runs the *Fieldwork Book Club*, an online book club with 500 subscribers across the world reading books on food, farming and the natural world and interviews different authors every month. Adam lives rurally near York with his family.

MARCUS BERKMANN



Marcus Berkman is the author of, among other books, *Berkman's Pop Miscellany*, *Berkman's Cricketing Miscellany* and *Still a Bit of Snap in the Celery*. He is a regular contributor to *Private Eye*, *Saga Magazine* and the *Daily Mail*, where he reviews books. He has written columns for the *Independent* magazine and *The Spectator*, TV reviews for the *Daily Mail* and sports columns for *Punch*, the *Independent* on Sunday and the *Daily Express*. He also writes and produces fiendish quizzes, and is a regular on BBC Radio 4's *Round Britain Quiz*.

JONATHAN COE



Jonathan Coe was born in Birmingham in 1961. He is the award-winning, bestselling author of novels that include *What a Carve Up!*, *The Rotters' Club*, *Middle England*, *Bournville* and 2024's *The Proof of My Innocence*. He has won the Costa Novel Award, the Prix du Livre Européen, the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize, the Prix Médicis Étranger and the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize, among many others. He is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and an Officier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. His work has been translated into 22 languages. *Suspended Moment*, an album of his musical compositions recorded live in Italy, was released on the British Progressive Jazz label in 2023.

CARYS DAVIES



Carys Davies is the author of *Clear* (2024), *The Mission House* (2020) and *West* (2018), which won the Wales Book of the Year Fiction award, was Runner-Up for the Society of Author's McKitterick Prize and shortlisted for the Rathbones Folio Prize. Her short stories have been widely published in magazines and anthologies and broadcast on BBC Radio 4, and have won the Jerwood Fiction Uncovered Prize, the Society of Authors' Olive Cook Award, the Royal Society of Literature's VS Pritchett Prize, and a Northern Writers' Award. Davies' second collection, *The Redemption of Galen Pike*, won the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award 2015.

ANNIE GARTHWAITE



Annie Garthwaite grew up in a working-class community in the northeast of England and studied at the University of Wales before embarking on an international business career. In 2017 she studied for an MA in Creative Writing at Warwick University where she wrote her debut novel, *Cecily*, published by Penguin in 2021. It was named a 'top pick' by *The Times* and *Sunday Times*, a 'Best Book of 2021' by independent bookshops and Waterstones, and has recently been optioned for TV. Annie's second novel, *The King's Mother*, was published in 2024 and immediately named 'Book of the Month' by *The Times*.

JON GOWER



Jon Gower has over forty books to his name, in Welsh and English, including *Birdland: A Journey Around Britain on the Wing*; *Raider: The Raymond Chester Story*; *The Turning Tide: A Biography of the Irish Sea*, and *Y Diwedd*, the final volume of his

Welsh language crime trilogy. He is also the author of *The Story of Wales* which accompanied the landmark BBC series, *An Island Called Smith* which gained the John Morgan Travel Writing Award, and *Y Storiwr* which won the Wales Book of the Year award. He is a former BBC Wales arts and media correspondent and was for many years the presenter of Radio Wales' arts' programme *First Hand*.

ANDREW GREEN



Since retiring as Librarian of the National Library of Wales in 2013, Andrew Green has spent time walking and writing – two interests that came together in his latest book, *Voices on the Path: a history of walking in Wales*. His previous books include *Wales in 100 Objects* and *Cymru mewn 100 Gwrthrych* (2018) and a satirical novel *Rhwng y Silffoedd* (2020). Since 2013 he has also published a weekly blog under the name 'gwallter'. He is currently working on a new book on Cader Idris as it has been imagined by artists since the eighteenth century.

BETHANY HANDLEY



Bethany Handley is an award-winning writer, poet and disability activist from Monmouthshire. Named one of the UK's ten most influential disabled people in politics, law, and media 2024 by the Shaw Trust, she campaigns for disability rights and better access to nature. An ambassador for Country Living's Access for All, Wales Coast Path, and Ramblers Cymru, her debut poetry pamphlet *Cling Film* was published by Seren in 2025. She co-edited *Beyond/Tu Hwnt*, an anthology of Welsh Deaf and disabled writers. Her work has been featured by the Poetry Foundation, Poetry Wales, BBC Radio 4, *Country Living* and more.

ALIS HAWKINS



Alis Hawkins grew up in Ceredigion and currently lives on the Welsh-English border. Her Teifi Valley Coroner historical crime series is set in the area where she grew up and has twice been shortlisted for the prestigious CWA Historical Dagger. *A Bitter Remedy*, the first in her Oxford Mysteries series, which introduces readers to young Welsh polymath Rhiannon Vaughan and college lecturer Basil Rice, was shortlisted for the 2024 Historical Dagger. The sequel, *The Skeleton Army* was published in 2024. Alis is a founder of Welsh crime writers' collective Crime Cymru, a writing tutor for Literature Wales and mentor to emerging crime writers.

HANAN ISSA



Hanan Issa is a Welsh-Iraqi poet, filmmaker, and artist. Her publications include her poetry collection *My Body Can House Two Hearts*, *Welsh Plural: Essays on the Future of Wales* and her children's poetry anthology *And I Hear Dragons*. Her winning monologue *With Her Back Straight* was performed as part of the Hijabi Monologues. She is part of the writers' room for Channel 4's award-winning series *We Are Lady Parts*. Her short film *The Golden Apple* – a Ffilm Cymru/ BBC Wales commission – is available on iPlayer. She was the 2023 Hay International Fellow and is the current National Poet of Wales.

ANGELA V. JOHN



Angela V. John has written over a dozen books including *Behind the Scenes: The Dramatic Lives of Philip Burton*, *Elizabeth Robins: Staging a Life 1862-1952* and *The Actors' Crucible: Port Talbot and the Making of Burton*,

Hopkins, Sheen and All the Others. Angela grew up in Port Talbot and first met Richard Burton in 1969. Formerly a History professor at the University of Greenwich, she is currently an honorary professor at Swansea University, president of *Llafur*, the Welsh People's History Society and of the Port Talbot Musical Theatre Society.

RHIAN E. JONES



Rhian E. Jones is a writer, critic and broadcaster from South Wales, who writes on history, politics and popular culture. She is co-editor of *Red Pepper* and writes for *Tribune* magazine. Her books include *Clampdown: Pop-Cultural Wars on Class and Gender* (zer0, 2013); *Petticoat Heroes: Gender, Culture and Popular Protest* (University of Wales Press, 2015); *Triptych: Three Studies of Manic Street Preachers' The Holy Bible* (Repeater, 2017), the anthology of women's music writing *Under My Thumb: Songs That Hate Women and the Women Who Love Them* (Repeater, 2017) and *Paint Your Town Red: How Preston Took Back Control and Your Town Can Too* (Repeater, 2021).

JJ LAMBERT



JJ Lambert lives in Carmarthenshire between the Brecon Beacons and the Elenydd. Her first novel, *Found Wanting*, was published by Black Bee Books in June 2024 and longlisted for the Mslexia Children's and Young Adult Prize. She co-facilitates the *Sit Down and Write* online writing group for marginalised Welsh writers and is currently researching the narration of Twm Sion Cati and the Elenydd.

CARYL LEWIS



Caryl Lewis is a multi-award-winning Welsh novelist, children's writer, playwright and screenwriter. Her

breakthrough novel *Martha, Jac a Sianco* (2004) is widely regarded as a modern classic of Welsh literature and sits on the Welsh curriculum. The film adaptation – with a screenplay by Lewis herself – went on to win six Welsh BAFTAs and the Spirit of the Festival Award at the 2010 Celtic Media Festival. Lewis's other screenwriting work includes the BBC/S4C thrillers *Hinterland* and *Hidden*. She is a visiting lecturer in Creative Writing at Cardiff University and lives with her family on a farm near Aberystwyth. 2022's *Drift* was her debut novel in the English language, followed in 2025 by *Bitter Honey*.

GWYNETH LEWIS



All Gwyneth Lewis ever wanted to be was a writer. Brought up Welsh-speaking in Cardiff, she studied English

and spent time in America. She was Wales's first National Poet and composed the six-foot-high words on the front of the Wales Millennium Centre. Her other non-fiction books are *Sunbathing in the Rain: A Cheerful Book on Depression* and *Two in a Boat: A Marital Voyage*. She has published nine books of poetry, the latest being *Sparrow Tree*.

LLOYD LLEWELLYN-JONES



Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones is Professor of Ancient History at Cardiff University. He is a specialist in the histories and cultures of Near Eastern and Hellenistic antiquity and champions a global approach to the study of the ancient world. Lloyd

has appeared on the BBC, Channel 4, in *The Times* and other media and on many popular podcasts. He has worked closely with the British Museum on major exhibitions. His previous books include *Persians: the Age of the Great Kings* and *Designs on the Past: How Hollywood Created the Ancient World*. Born in Cefn Cribwr, Lloyd now lives in Taff's Well, Wales.

ROGER MORGAN-GRENVILLE



Roger Morgan-Grenville is writer and conservation campaigner specialising in the practicalities of biodiversity

loss and recovery. His books include *Liquid Gold: Bees and the Pursuit of Midlife Honey*, *Shearwater*, *Taking Stock: A Journey Among Cows*, *Across a Waking Land*, *The Return of the Grey Partridge* and 2025's *The Restless Coast*. Before becoming a full-time writer, he was a soldier and worked at a small kitchenware company. He also helped to found and fundraise for the charity Help for Heroes and is a founding member and former chair of trustees of the campaigning charity, Curlew Action.

DAFYDD MORGAN LEWIS



Daw Dafydd Morgan Lewis yn wreiddiol o'r Foel yn Sir Drefaldwyn. Bu'n gweithio i Gymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg

am flynyddoedd. Ac mae wedi golygu nifer o gyfrolau o farddoniaeth fel *Cymru yn fy Mhen*, *Cerddi Powys a Barddoniaeth John Ellis Lewis Foeldrehaearn*. Mae hefyd (ar y cyd efo Rocet Arwel Jones) wedi golygu cyfrol o ysgrifau newyddiadurrol yr awdur Angharad Tomos. Bu'n ysgrifennu erthyglau (adolygiadau yn bennaf i gylchgronau a phapurau newydd fel *Y Cymro*, *Barn*, *Taliesin* a'r *Pedwar Gwynt*. Bu hefyd am flynyddoedd yn aelod o Dîm Talwrn y Beirdd Tafarn y Cŵps. Ond mae wedi mynd yn rhy hen i hynny bellach.

RHYS MWYN



Rhys Mwyn is a musician, archaeologist, writer and broadcaster. As a music manager, agent, publicist,

Record Label and promoter, he has worked with acts as varied as Catatonia, The Rich Kids, Viv Albertine (The Slits), Y Cyrff and Datblygu. He previously played bass guitar in the Welsh Punk band, Anhrefn and established the record label Recordiau Anhrefn. Rhys is a regular contributor to Yr Herald Gymraeg and Llafar Gwlad, has published his autobiography *Cam i'r Tywyllch* (Y Lolfa) and written several Welsh language books on Welsh Archaeology (Carreg Gwalch). Montgomeryshire born, he now lives in Caernarfon.

MICHELE O'LEARY



Michele O'Leary is now retired and living in Pembrokeshire, but for 41 years she practised as a barrister and, for the last 21, sat

as a fee-paid judge at the Central Family Court in London. She became a Master of the Bench of Lincoln's Inn in 2007 and has been heavily involved in advocacy training in the UK and internationally. She continues to teach advocacy in Keble College and Lincoln's Inn and enjoys being close to the Irish Sea (preferably only in it in the summer). She has known Jonathan Coe since they both had real colour in their hair.

MIKE PARKER



Mike Parker is the bestselling author of *On the Red Hill* and *All the Wide Border* as well other books including *Map*

Addict and *The Wild Rover*. He was also the co-author of the first five editions of the *Rough Guide to Wales*. He has written and presented several series of travelogues for ITV Wales, has worked on numerous other TV and radio programmes, and occasionally performs as a stand-up comedian and actor. Born and bred in the Midlands, Mike now lives near Machynlleth, identifying as Cymro o ddewis – a Welshman by choice.

ANGHARAD PRICE



Mae Angharad Price yn nofelydd, ysgrifwr ac ysgolhaig. Enillodd ei nofel, *O, Tyn y Gorchudd*, y Fedal

Ryddiaith yn Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 2002 a Gwobr Llyfr y Flwyddyn 2003. Ei nofel ddiweddaraf yw *Nelan a Bo*, hanes cyfeillgarwch dau blentyn yng nghyfnod cythryblus y chwyldro diwydiannol a'r Diwygiad Methodistiaidd ar ddechrau'r bedwaredd ganrif ar bymtheg. Mae Angharad yn byw yng Nghaernarfon ac yn Athro'r Gymraeg ym Mhrifysgol Bangor.

TAZ RAHMAN



Taz Rahman is a Cardiff based poet, writer and literary content creator. His debut poetry collection *East of the*

Sun, *West of the Moon*, published by Seren Books, was longlisted for the Laurel Prize. He was also shortlisted for the Royal Society of Literature's Jerwood Poetry Prize 2024. He is the founder of Wales's first YouTube poetry channel, *Just Another Poet*.

JON SAVAGE



Jon Savage is an award-winning, bestselling author, broadcaster and journalist. His books include *The Secret Public: How LGBTQ Performers Shaped Popular Culture*; *This Searing Light*, the *Sun and Everything Else*; *Joy Division: The Oral History*; *England's Dreaming: Sex Pistols and Punk Rock*; *Teenage: The Creation of Youth, 1875-1945 and 1966: The Year The Decade Exploded*. He has written sleeve notes for Wire, St. Etienne and the Pet Shop Boys, among others, and his compilations include: *Meridian 1970* (Heavenly/EMI 2005); *Queer Noises: From the Closest to the Charts 1961-1976* (Trikont 2006); and *Dreams Come True: Classic Electro 1982-87* (Domino 2008).

OWEN STANTON



Owen Stanton is a performance storyteller, writer, director and host of the *Time between Times* podcast. Owen has told stories from Wales and beyond for most of his life and particularly loves Welsh Ghost lore. His Edinburgh fringe show *Dark Heart of the Valley* won an award which led to him touring the USA. *Time between Times* was recently nominated in the listeners choice category of the British podcast awards and Owen often appears on TV and radio talking about the strange. He is 52 years old and can do nothing with his hair.

ED TALFAN



Ed Talfan is the Creative Director and CEO of Severn Screen Ltd. His recent credits include the film *Mr Burton* (2025), starring Toby Jones and Harry Lawtey; *Havoc* (2024), starring Tom Hardy and Forest Whitaker and *The Pembrokeshire*

Murders (2021) starring Luke Evans. He also Executive Produced and co-created the BBC drama series, *Hidden/Craith*, which ran for three seasons between 2018 and 2022; was Executive Producer on the four-part BBC drama *Steeltown Murders* (2023), and co-created and produced three series of the award-winning drama *Hinterland* (2013-2016). Ed is also a board member of Hijinx Theatre.

KANDACE SIOBHAN WALKER



Kandace Siobhan Walker is a writer and artist of Jamaican-Canadian, Saltwater Geechee and Welsh heritage. She is the author of two books of poetry *Kaleido* (Bad Betty Press, 2022) and *Cowboy* (CHEERIO, 2023). Her installation *Dreamerism* (2024) appeared in Jerwood Arts' nationally-touring group exhibition *Survey III*. She lives in London.

SIONED WILIAM



Sioned Wiliam comes from Barry. She is the author of the novels, *Dal i Fynd*, *Chwynnu*, *Cicio'r Bar* and *Y Gwyliau* and is currently working on her fifth, *60-Rhywbeth*. Sioned began her television and radio career at the BBC, before becoming an independent producer. Her credits include *Tonight with Jonathan Ross*, *Game On*, *Big Train* and *Yonderland*. She also produced *iDot* and exec produced *Rhestr Nadolig Wil* for Boom/S4C. She has been nominated for a Bafta award three times and has won a British Comedy Award and a Bronze Rose at Montreux. She was also a Commissioning Editor for ITV and BBC Radio 4 and spent last year as the interim CEO of S4C.

RUSS WILLIAMS



Russ Williams grew up in Caernarfon and now lives in Cardiff. He has worked as a journalist in Wales and Australia and continues to write while working as a family mediator, helping to prevent youth homelessness. He is a member of Roath Writers, a Cardiff-based writing group, and the author of *Free House*, a collection of short stories set in a fictional Welsh pub. He also runs two blogs, *Brawd Autistico*, which documents his life with an autistic brother, and *Where the Folk*, about Welsh folklore and urban myths and the inspiration for his 2023 book, *Where the Folk*.

MATTHEW YEOMANS



Matthew Yeomans is an author and writer. His book, *Return to My Trees*, was published by Calon in 2022, followed in 2024 by *Seascapes: Notes From a Changing Coastline*. As a journalist he has written about the environment, sustainability, travel, business and technology for publications in both the UK and the US, including *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *National Geographic* and *The Atlantic Monthly*. He has also been a senior editor at *The Industry Standard* and *The Village Voice*. Matthew has also taught journalism and writing at New York University and Cardiff University School of Journalism, Media and Culture.



FRIDAY 6TH JUNE 2025

BORDERLANDS WITH HANAN ISSA AND MIKE PARKER IN CONVERSATION WITH SIONED WILIAM

Montgomery Town Hall

7.00 pm (bar open)

£9.00



National Poet of Wales Hanan Issa joins Monty Lit Fest favourites Mike Parker and Sioned Wiliam for a whistle-stop tour of borders, both on the map and in our heads and hearts.

As Montgomeryshire well knows, a border is a place of contested identity and sometimes tension, but also one of coming together, of mutual support, strength and celebration.

The session will feature Hanan's collection *My Body Can House Two Hearts*, Mike's book *All the Wide Border*, and more besides.

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FRIDAY 6TH JUNE 2025

LATE LOUNGE WITH JON SAVAGE IN CONVERSATION WITH RHYS MWYN

Montgomery Town Hall

8.00 pm (bar open)

£9.00



Join author, broadcaster and journalist Jon Savage and Welsh music legend Rhys Mwyn for a Monty Lit Fest Late Lounge that'll live long in the memory. Jon will be discussing his writing life – from sleeve notes to bestselling books about punk rock, teenagers and, most recently, the role gay performers have played in popular culture.

The Secret Public looks at key moments in music and entertainment history between 1955 and 1979 which helped move gay culture from the margins to the mainstream and changed the face of pop forever – from the ambiguous sexuality of Little Richard in the 1950s through David Bowie and glam rock to Sylvester's *You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)*.

Don't miss this chance to meet one of the UK's top music writers.



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Monty Lit Fest 2025

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SATURDAY 7TH JUNE 2025

JONATHAN COE IN CONVERSATION WITH WITH MICHELE O'LEARY

Montgomery Town Hall

10.00 am

£9.00



Monty Lit Fest is delighted to welcome to Montgomeryshire the award-winning, bestselling author, Jonathan Coe.



Join us to hear about his writing life as the author of satirical, often funny books that explore the best and worst of British social and political life, including the much-loved *The Rotters' Club*, *Middle England*, *Bournville* and 2024's *The Proof of My Innocence*, a cosy crime mystery – but not, of course, as we know it.

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EVABUILD



SATURDAY 7TH JUNE 2025

CLEAR WITH CARYS DAVIES

Montgomery Town Hall

11.00 am

£9.00



The short novel is having something of a moment and award-winning novelist, Carys Davies, is an undoubted master of the form.

Her latest novel, *Clear*, is another extraordinary contribution to the genre, a perfectly structured, intimate drama set on a remote Shetland island at the time of the Highland Clearances in the 1840s.

Join us for the chance to hear from Carys about why the short novel and short stories have been her writing forms of choice and how, in *Clear*, she manages to bring to such vivid life the tender story of two very different men, buffeted by history and who share no common language, yet still manage to connect and form a bond.



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THE DRAGON MONTGOMERY

A NEW CHAPTER FOR THE DRAGON

The new team at the Dragon are proud to be able to continue our sponsorship of Monty LitFest and wish it every success.

If you would like to eat with us during the LitFest weekend, bring your event ticket with you and get 10% off the price of your meal.*

To book a table: 01686 668359 or reception@thedragonmontgomery.co.uk

*Booking is essential. One offer per booking.

SATURDAY 7TH JUNE 2025

NIGHTSHADE MOTHER WITH GWYNETH LEWIS IN CONVERSATION WITH SIONED WILIAM

Montgomery Town Hall

12.00 am

£9.00



Gwyneth Lewis is best-known for her work as a poet, as the inaugural National Poet of Wales and for penning the iconic six-foot-high words that grace the front of the Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff.



But she has another, darker story she has been preparing to tell all her life, in diaries she's kept since childhood. Now, in her book, *Nightshade Mother*, she recounts that story of her toxic upbringing at the hands of a controlling, coercive mother.

Co-written with her younger self, it's a haunting, moving and ultimately uplifting memoir in which Gwyneth confronts what happened to her; how she found solace in art and language and how she has reconciled herself to her past.

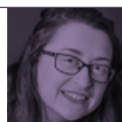
SATURDAY 7TH JUNE 2025

REBECCA'S COUNTRY WITH RHIAN E JONES IN CONVERSATION WITH ALIS HAWKINS

Montgomery Town Hall

1.30 pm

£9.00



In the early years of the Victorian era, men in Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire and Cardiganshire rebelled against the imposition of tolls on the roads they travelled while making their living. They dressed themselves in dramatic and colourful costumes, and led by the enigmatic figure of 'Rebecca', they attacked symbols of injustice, redistributed wealth, and clashed with both local authorities and the national government.



Hear from author Rhian E Jones as she explores The Rebecca Riots, telling compelling and human stories of direct action that led to uprisings in communities across Wales, as ordinary people responded to the sweeping and severe changes of the early nineteenth century.

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SATURDAY 7TH JUNE 2025

THE CLEOPATRAS WITH LLOYD LLEWELLYN-JONES

Montgomery Town Hall

2.30 pm

£9.00



We may think we know all about Cleopatra. Immortalised in drama, music, art and film as a lover, seductress and Egypt's greatest queen; the ultimately tragic figure who captivated two of the greatest Romans of the day, Julius Caesar and Marc Antony.

But the real-life story of the Cleopatra VII is even more compelling. She was the last of seven Cleopatras who ruled Egypt before it succumbed to the Roman Empire, all of them powerhouses of the Ptolemaic Dynasty, extraordinary women who kept a close grip on power in the wealthiest country of the ancient world.

Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones makes a welcome return to Monty Lit Fest to share their remarkable story, culminating in the beguiling and tragic legend of the last queen of Egypt.

SATURDAY 7TH JUNE 2025

WRITERS' WORKSHOP #1 WRITING BODY AND MIND WITH JJ LAMBERT

The Activity Centre

2.30 pm

FREE (see details below)



How do we write about body and mind? And how do our physical and emotional experiences feed into our writing?

Join writer JJ Lambert of the University of Aberystwyth Centre for Creativity and Wellbeing for a practical workshop that considers how the interaction of our emotions and our bodies can lead to more effective storytelling. There will be some simple writing exercises and discussion. The workshop will focus on the feeling of joy, but the techniques used will also be applicable to other emotional responses.

There is no need to be an experienced writer; just bring along a notepad or laptop, and your wonderful, individual body.

This free session is funded by the University of Aberystwyth Centre for Creativity and Wellbeing. The 15 places will be allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.



Monty Lit Fest 2025

SATURDAY 7TH JUNE 2025

ALL HIS SPIES: THE SECRET WORLD OF ROBERT CECIL WITH STEPHEN ALFORD

Montgomery Town Hall

3.30 pm

£9.00



Spying is often known as 'the second oldest' profession – and with good reason. As long as there have been competing states or nations, spies and their spymasters have sought to defend their interests.

As a statesman and spymaster at the heart of the Tudor and Stuart state, Robert Cecil was one such vital figure, managing the succession from Elizabeth I to James I and VI and warding off military and religious threats, including the Spanish Armada and the Gunpowder Plot.

Historian Stephen Alford knows how the outcome for British history could have been very different. Hear from him as he explores how Cecil's sureness of purpose, his espionage network and good luck conspired to keep England uninvaded and to create a new 'British' monarchy which has endured to the present day.

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SATURDAY 7TH JUNE 2025

WHERE THE FOLK WITH RUSS WILLIAMS IN CONVERSATION WITH OWEN STATON

Montgomery Town Hall

4.30 pm

£9.00



Russ Williams was raised on Wales's folk stories. So, as an adult, he decides to set out in Griff, his creaky red Fiesta, in search of the places associated with Welsh legends, folklore and urban myths.

The result is *Where the Folk*, a Welsh folklore road trip where Russ explores the origins behind the myths, talks to experts and storytellers and brings to life stories of everything from witches, giants and heroic kings to giant beaver monsters, vampire furniture and pirate-fighting monks.

Meet Russ in conversation with storyteller Owen Staton to hear all about that trip and what those stories tell us about Wales past and present.

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SATURDAY 7TH JUNE 2025

WRITERS' WORKSHOP #2

WRITING NATURE WITH
BETHANY HANDLEY, TAZ
RAHMAN AND KANDACE
SIOBHAN WALKER IN
CONVERSATION WITH
SAIRAH AHSAN

Online panel

5.30 pm

FREE (see details below)

Drawing from our writers' vast range of experiences, this online workshop gives a fresh perspective on this ever-popular genre, exploring in a panel discussion the literary traditions that have influenced their writing and offering advice on how to innovate in such a well-established area of writing and publishing. The session will conclude with a Q&A for all attendees.

This free session is funded by the University of Aberystwyth Centre for Creativity and Wellbeing. It will take place online, but please register here so that we can send you the joining details <https://ticketlab.app/event/30961#/>



SATURDAY 7TH JUNE 2025

MONTY LIT FEST'S BIG QUIZ NIGHT

WITH MARCUS
BERKMANN

Montgomery Town Hall

8.00 pm (bar open)

£2pp / £15 per team of 8



It's back: Montgomeryshire's premier quiz night with author and quizmaster, Marcus Berkmann.

As well as being a bestselling author, Marcus Berkmann is also the deviser of fiendish quizzes. Join us once again for the chance to pit your wits against Marcus in the glorious surroundings of Montgomery Town Hall.

Come with team already formed, or join one on the night. But be prepared for much head-scratching and brain taxing. Who knows: this could be your team's year.

To help us use the space we have available at the Town Hall to best effect, please buy a table/team ticket where possible so that we can allocate tables accordingly. Smaller teams might have to share tables or include people who have bought tickets but are not already part of a team.

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SUNDAY 8TH JUNE 2025

THE KING'S MOTHER WITH ANNIE GARTHWAITE

Montgomery Town Hall

10.00 am

£9.00



Annie Garthwaite's debut novel *Cecily* won immediate acclaim. A firm Monty Lit Fest favourite, we're delighted to welcome Annie to this year's Festival to celebrate the paperback publication of her sequel, *The King's Mother*.

It's 1461. Through blood and battle, Cecily de Neville's son Edward has gained England's throne and she stands at his shoulder, first to claim the title *The King's Mother*. But to win a throne is not to keep it. As brother betrays brother, and trusted cousins turn treacherous, other mothers rise up to fight for other sons. For there can be only one King, and only one King's Mother.

Hear from Annie as she takes us from the Wars of the Roses to the dawn of the Tudor age with a story of mothers and sons; of maternal ferocity and female ambition – of all they can build and all they can destroy.

SUNDAY 8TH JUNE 2025

NELAN A BO GYDAG ANGHARAD PRICE YN SGWRSIO GYDA DAFYDD MORGAN LEWIS

The Dragon Hotel

10.00 am

£9.00



Awdur y clasur cyfoes *O, Tyn y Gorchudd* yn trafod ei nofel newydd, *Nelan a Bo*. Gan agor yn 1799, dyma nofel sydd wedi'i gosod mewn cyfnod o newid cymdeithasol mawr. Mae'r tir yn cael ei gau. Mae'r chwyldro diwydiannol ar droed. Mae anghydfurfiaeth yn ennill ei lle. Pa ffawd sy'n aros gwerin cefn-gwlad? Ond mae hon hefyd yn stori gariad, a hwnnw'n mynd o'r crud i'r bedd, a'i liwiau cyfnewidiol yn creu patrymau blêr o ystyr ac o deimlad ar gynfas lom y rhostir.



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Monty Lit Fest 2025

SUNDAY 8TH JUNE 2025

IN CONVERSATION WITH CARYL LEWIS

Montgomery Town Hall

11.00 am

£9.00



Author Caryl Lewis is a Welsh literary giant. Three times Wales Book of the Year winner, she writes in Welsh and English; for adults and children. It's a delight and a privilege to welcome her to this year's Monty Lit Fest to talk about her writing.

Caryl's latest English language novel will also be hot off the presses. In *Bitter Honey*, as Hannah prepares for the funeral of her husband of fifty years, she discovers eleven letters he has left her, each an examination of an aspect of their marriage. As the letters unfold, they reveal a devastating secret that will make Hannah have to re-evaluate her whole life.

It promises to be another *tour de force*. Don't miss this chance to meet one of Wales's greatest literary talents

SUNDAY 8TH JUNE 2025

VOICES ON THE PATH WITH ANDREW GREEN IN CONVERSATION WITH MIKE PARKER

Montgomery Town Hall

12.00 pm

£9.00



Wales has a rich walking tradition, whether by its own people or by visitors, and it's this tradition that Andrew Green uses as his starting point for *Voices on the Path*, his history of Wales told by and through a host of remarkable walkers.

Join Andrew in conversation with Mike Parker as he takes us on a meandering journey through that history. Beginning with the footprints of Mesolithic people in the mud of the Severn estuary and ending with strollers on Swansea's promenade today, we'll be treated to a wealth of stories about Wales as seen through the eyes of walkers, telling us much about how Welsh people have lived, and how Wales has been seen by people from outside.



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SUNDAY 8TH JUNE 2025

BIRDLAND WITH JON GOWER IN CONVERSATION WITH ADAM BEDFORD

Montgomery Town Hall

1.30 pm

£9.00



Monty Lit Fest favourite Jon Gower is a lifelong birder and, in his new book, he offers us a joyous celebration of Britain's rich bird life.



From the symphonic song of the wren to the clack of a puffin's beak and from epic migrations to sunset murmurations, Jon explores our intimate connection with the bird life around us, visiting some of the best places in Britain to watch birds and searching for some species he has always wanted to see.

But all is not well in *Birdland*, and the book also reminds us of the impact of the climate emergency, the decline in biodiversity and warming oceans on our birds and what we can – and must – do to defend them.

Hear from Jon as he shares his bird's-eye view of the crucial contribution our feathered friends make both to our lives and to the natural world.

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SUNDAY 8TH JUNE 2025

THE RESTLESS COAST WITH ROGER MORGAN-GRENVILLE IN CONVERSATION WITH ADAM BEDFORD

Montgomery Town Hall

2.30 pm

£9.00



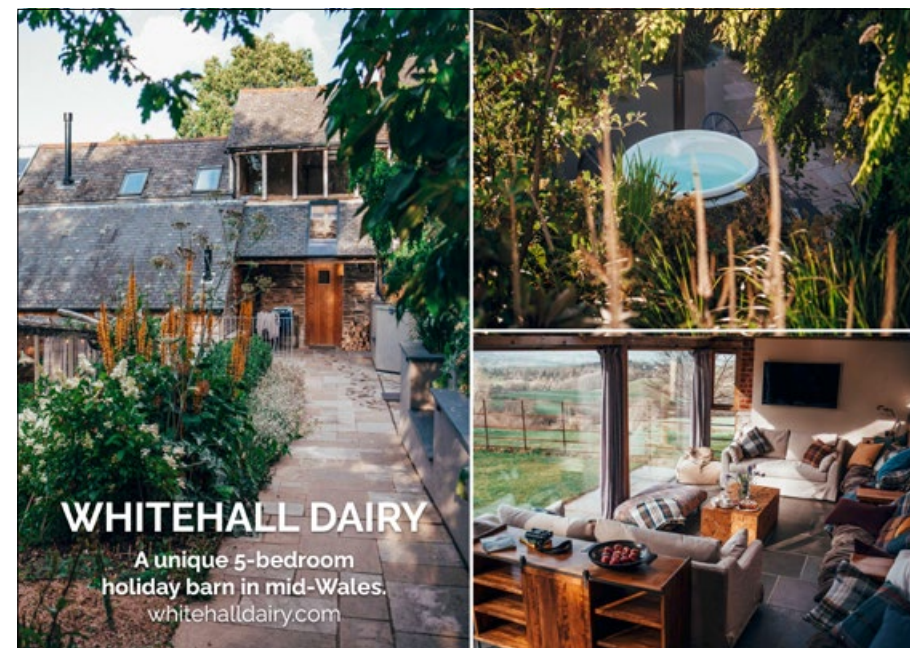
The island of Britain has over 10,000 miles of coastline, steeped in history and constantly shifting, changing, adapting and providing.



Donning his walking boots once again, Roger Morgan-Grenville has journeyed around it – starting from the northern coast of Scotland and travelling south, east and north again. *The Restless Coast* tells the fascinating story of the coast's challenges and opportunities, championing along the way the people who are trying to protect it.

Making a welcome return to Monty Lit Fest, Roger will tell us all about his travels, the coastline's extraordinary and precious natural history and why he describes the book as a 'love letter to our island edge.'

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SUNDAY 8TH JUNE 2025

SEASCAPE WITH MATTHEW YEOMANS IN CONVERSATION WITH JON GOWER

Montgomery Town Hall

3.30 pm

£9.00



The coast of Wales is an important part of our national story and identity. Welsh lives have always been influenced by the sea that surrounds a large part of our nation.



It's a story that Matthew Yeomans explores in his new book, *Seascapes*. Walking along sections of the Wales Coast Path – from the Severn to the Dee estuaries – he uncovers how the sea has shaped us through history, mythology, literature and culture. He also challenges us to face the realities of rising sea levels and how we will have to adapt where and how we live alongside the sea in future.

Join Matthew for a session that celebrates both the joys and challenges of the Welsh coast and its communities: from saints to pirates; artists and poets to industrial might; reclaimed to lost land and more.

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SUNDAY 8TH JUNE 2025

BEHIND THE SCENES: THE DRAMATIC LIVES OF PHILIP BURTON WITH ANGELA V JOHN AND ED TALFAN

Montgomery Town Hall

4.30 pm

£10.00 (£15 with film)



Everyone's heard of the actor Richard Burton. But many will be less familiar with the schoolmaster responsible for training and transforming his pupil Richard Jenkins into Richard Burton, star of stage and screen.

Philip Burton's story is no less remarkable than that of his famous pupil. As well as supporting his famous protégé throughout his

career, he was also a remarkable character in his own right: an actor and writer who became a BBC radio producer and, after moving to the US, the first director of the American Musical and Dramatic Academy in New York. Little wonder that he's the subject of an important new biography and major new film, *Mr Burton*.

Monty Lit Fest is delighted to help celebrate that life with his biographer, Angela V John and the film's producer, Ed Talfan. Join us to hear more about Philip Burton's long and eventful career and how he helped aspiring actors and writers to flourish on both sides of the Atlantic.

After the session (starting at 6.30pm, see p.28), we'll be screening the film, Mr Burton, in association with Montgomery Movie Club.

**MONTGOMERY
MOVIE CLUB**



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MONTGOMERY MOVIE CLUB AND PONTAFREN



SUNDAY 8TH JUNE 2025

FILM SCREENING: MR BURTON IN ASSOCIATION WITH MONTGOMERY MOVIE CLUB

Montgomery Town Hall

6.30 pm

£10.00 (£15 with panel – see p.27)

Based on a remarkable true story, discover how the poor son of a miner became one of the greatest actors the world has ever known, with the help of an unlikely mentor.

In the Welsh town of Port Talbot, 1942, Richard Jenkins (Harry Lawtey) lives as a wayward schoolboy, caught between the pressures of his struggling family, a devastating war, and his own ambitions. However, a new opportunity arises when Richard's



natural talent for drama catches the attention of his teacher, Philip Burton (BAFTA winner Toby Jones).

Taking Richard under his wing, the young man thrives thanks to Philip's strict tutelage and the guidance of kindly landlady, Ma Smith (Academy Award nominee Lesley Manville). However, as the acting world comes within Richard's reach, the burden of his past risks holding him back forever.

Running Time: 124 mins

Cast: Toby Jones, Harry Lawtey, Lesley Manville

Director: Marc Evans

Writers: Tom Bullough, Josh Hyams

Producers: Ed Talfan, Josh Hyams, Hannah Thomas, Trevor Matthews.



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MINI FEST

JILL KIBBLE MONTY MINI FEST

IN ASSOCIATION WITH FIREFLY PRESS

Named in honour of the much-missed dynamo of Montgomery, this is Monty Lit Fest's new festival of stories and writing ... for children!



Presented in association with Firefly Press, the Jill Kibble Monty Minifest brings the best children's authors to the county, inspiring the next generation of readers – and writers.

FEATURING...

GEORGIA DICKINSON



Georgia adored reading to her own four children when they were growing up and loves bringing the enchanting world of stories to life. She worked as a Teaching Assistant at Montgomery Primary School for a number of years where she enjoyed helping children to develop a love of reading. She believes in the magic of books to inspire, educate and entertain, kindling a life-long passion for reading in every child.

CLAIRE FAYERS



Claire grew up in South-east Wales where, thanks to her local library, she developed a lifelong obsession with myth and magic. Her books include *The Accidental Pirates* (Waterstones Book of the Month, shortlisted for the Children's Book Award), and *Storm Hound* (winner of the Tir na nOg award 2020). She lives in the Welsh mountains with her husband and two disappointingly unmagical cats.

REBECCA HARRY



Rebecca lives in Cardiff with her two children. She studied Graphic Design in Exeter. From her little studio at home, Rebecca has illustrated many picture books for children and babies, including for Macmillan, Nosy Crow and Little Tiger Press.

CYNDY HUMPHREYS



Cyndy studied English and Drama at the College of Education, Birmingham University where she qualified as a teacher. She has many years' experience of teaching both primary and secondary age children in a number of different settings including special needs education. She is passionate about the importance of reading to children and young people and has seen first-hand the benefits of reading to children's literacy and their development. Cyndy has four adult children and seven grandchildren and delights in introducing them to an array of stories when they visit her in Montgomery, where she lives with her husband.

LUCY OWEN



Lucy is a newsreader for BBC Wales and presents X-Ray. She has read the news for HTV and the ITV news across the UK. She is married to presenter Rhodri Owen and has one son and they live in Cowbridge in south Wales.

BEATRICE WALLBANK



Beatrice grew up in mid Wales, surrounded by sheep. When not wandering about in wild places thinking about stories she works backstage in theatre, storytelling in a different form. She also really likes Old Stuff and is a historian of things relating to the sea in early medieval Wales.

SUNDAY 8 JUNE 2025 – MONTGOMERY ACTIVITY CENTRE

Storytime for the under-5s with Georgia Dickinson and Cyndy Humphreys	10.00 – 10.30 am
The Sea House with Lucy Owen and Rebecca Harry	10.45 – 11.30 am
The Sleeping Stones with Beatrice Wallbank	11.45 am – 12.30 pm
Welsh Giants, Ghost and Goblins with Claire Fayers	12.45 – 1.30 pm



SUNDAY 8TH JUNE 2025

STORYTIME FOR THE UNDER-5S CYNDY HUMPHREYS AND GEORGIA DICKINSON

The Activity Centre

10.00 am

Free

Come along and hear
some wonderful stories.
Children must be
accompanied by an adult.



SUNDAY 8TH JUNE 2025

THE SEA HOUSE WITH LUCY OWEN AND REBECCA HARRY

The Activity Centre

10.45 am

£5.00 (adult +3 children*)

Join BBC Wales
broadcaster and presenter,
Lucy Owen. As she reads
from her book *The Sea
House* and shares with you lots of
interesting facts about the different
sea creatures in the book, award-
winning illustrator, Rebecca Harry
shows you how to draw them. For
ages 5-8.



SUNDAY 8TH JUNE 2025

THE SLEEPING STONES WITH BEATRICE WALLBANK

The Activity Centre

11.45 am

£5.00 (adult +3 children*)

Hear Beatrice Wallbank tell you about
Gruff and his new friend Matylda in *The
Sleeping Stones*. Beatrice shares her
inspirations for writing magical stories,
which will help to spark ideas for your
next story too. Will this interactive
workshop lead you down a spooky
overgrown path or along a wild, stormy
beach? You decide. For ages 8+.



SUNDAY 8TH JUNE 2025

WELSH GIANTS, GHOSTS AND GOBLINS WITH CLAIRE FAYERS

The Activity Centre

12.45 am

£5.00 (adult +3 children*)

Claire Fayers will tell us how and why
she chose the seventeen adventures,
fairy tales and ghost stories from
across Wales for her award-winning
book *Welsh Giants, Ghosts and
Goblins* and why it's important to
keep these stories alive. For ages 8+.



* up to three children.



COMMUNITY EVENTS

As well as the main programme and Monty Mini Fest, there'll be so much to see and do over the Festival weekend that we're sure you'll want to make the most of it when you're in town.

All community events are free and open to all.

Art exhibition

Enjoy the work of our talented local creatives

Friday 6th June 10.00am–4.00pm

Saturday 7th June 10.00am–5.30pm

Sunday 8th June 10.00am–4.00pm

Montgomery Institute, Arthur Street

Following the success of previous years' exhibitions over the Festival weekend, Celf Trefaldwyn will bring together a vibrant collection of art and craft in an exhibition by over 20 creative individuals from across Montgomeryshire.

NEW for 2025

Art workshop

Make a miniature artist's book with artist Catherine Jones

Sunday 8th June 2.30–4.00pm

Montgomery Activity Centre, School Lane, Montgomery

Unleash your creativity in this fun and playful workshop! Learn to fold a simple book and transform it into a tiny masterpiece using drawing, painting, collage, and stamping.

Suitable for adults and children age 12 upwards.

The workshop is free on a first-come-first-served basis, but there are only 15 places, so reserve your place now!

Street music with Monty Folk and friends

Saturday 7th June

Morning:

Outside the Town Hall

Lunch time:

Town hall or Montgomery

Community Garden, Arthur Street

Afternoon:

Montgomery Community

Garden, Arthur Street

Sunday 8th June

9.00–9.55am

Outside the Town Hall

12.45–1.30pm

Town Hall or Montgomery

Community Garden, Arthur Street

4.15–4.55pm

Welsh tunes on Broad Street

Hear from a stunning array of local talent who will be performing in the town over the Festival weekend.

Montgomery creative writing group readings

Saturday 7th June 4.30am–5.30pm

Montgomery Institute, Arthur Street

Join members of our local creative writing group, who will be reading extracts from their work.

EAT, DRINK AND BE MERRY

We have a wide range of food and drink options for Festival visitors over the weekend.

Festival coffee and cake

Saturday 7th and Sunday 8th June

9.30am–12.30pm and 1.30pm–4.30pm

Montgomery Town Hall, Broad Street

Back by popular demand, coffee, tea and home-made cake at the main Festival venue courtesy of four Montgomery community groups raising funds for the Montgomery Street Fair; Trefaldwyn Ladies Club; the Montgomery Show and St Nicholas Churchyard.

Amore Pizzas

Saturday 7th June 12.00pm–4.00pm

Sunday 8th June 12.00pm–5.00pm

Broad Street

Delicious wood-fired pizzas straight from the oven. Enjoy traditional favourites like pepperoni or Hawaiian or customise with your own toppings. Veggie and gluten free options available.

Castle Kitchen

Broad Street

Friday 6th and Saturday 7th June

Café 10.00am–3.00pm

(lunch served 12.00–2.00pm)

Wine bar: 5.30–9.30pm.

Sunday 8th June

Café 10.00am–3.00pm

(lunch served 12.00–2.00pm)

Delicious food all freshly prepared and baked on the premises, served in the gorgeous courtyard garden or indoors – and why not stay for an early evening glass of wine too?

The Checkers

Broad Street

Lunch *Thursday–Saturday*

12.00–1.30pm

Dinner *Wednesday–Saturday*

7.00–8.30pm

5-star restaurant with rooms: checkerswales.co.uk.

The Crown

Castle Street

Open 6.00–11.00pm

The Dragon Hotel

Market Square

Lunch 12.00–2.30pm

Evening meals 6.00–9.00pm

Bar meals and bistro to book call 01686 668359.

Ivy House Cafe

Church Bank

Friday 6th and Saturday 7th June

10.00am–5.00pm

Sunday 8th June

10.00am–2.00pm

Montgomery Fish Bar

Broad Street

Open 12.00–11.00pm every day

FRIDAY 6 June 2025

Borderlands with Hanan Issa and Mike Parker	7.00 pm	Town Hall +bar
Late Lounge: Jon Savage in conversation with Rhys Mwyn	8.00 pm	Town Hall +bar

SATURDAY 7 June 2025

In conversation with Jonathan Coe	10.00 am	Town Hall
Clear with Carys Davies	11.00 am	Town Hall
Nightshade Mother with Gwyneth Lewis	12.00 am	Town Hall
Rebecca's Country with Rhian E Jones	1.30 pm	Town Hall
The Cleopatras with Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones	2.30 pm	Town Hall
Writers' workshop #1: Writing body and mind with JJ Lambert	2.30 pm	Activity Centre
All His Spies: The Secret Life of Robert Cecil with Stephen Alford	3.30 pm	Town Hall
Where the Folk with Russ Williams and Owen Staton	4.30 pm	Town Hall
Writers' Workshop #2: Writing nature	5.30 pm	Online panel
Monty Lit Fest's Big Quiz Night	8.00 pm	Town Hall +bar

SUNDAY 8 JUNE 2025

The King's Mother with Annie Garthwaite	10.00 am	Town Hall
Nelan a Bo gydag Angharad Price	10.00 am	Dragon Hotel
In conversation with Caryl Lewis	11.00 am	Town Hall
Voices on the Path with Andrew Green and Mike Parker	12.00 pm	Town Hall
Birdland with Jon Gower	1.30 pm	Town Hall
The Restless Coast with Roger Morgan-Grenville	2.30 pm	Town Hall
Seascape: Notes from a Changing Coastline with Matthew Yeomans	3.30 pm	Town Hall
Behind the Scenes: The Dramatic Lives of Philip Burton with Angela V John and Ed Talfan	4.30 pm	Town Hall
Film screening: Mr Burton in association with Montgomery Movie Club	6.30 pm	Town Hall

TICKETS

You can buy tickets online from **montylitfest.com** ...or in person from **The Bookshop Montgomery** and **The Ivy House Café**.

Limited tickets may be available for purchase on the door.

Save with a **Weekend Pass**.

