



Festive Greetings from the Newcastle Emlyn U3A Committee



As we wrap up 2025, we just want to say a big thank you for being part of our U3A community. Whether you've joined us for talks, trips, at an interest group or simply enjoyed a cuppa and a chat, it's been wonderful spending time together.

We wish you all a very Merry Christmas filled with laughter, and a Happy New Year full of new adventures, learning, and friendship.

See you in 2026 for more fun and shared experiences!

Warm wishes,

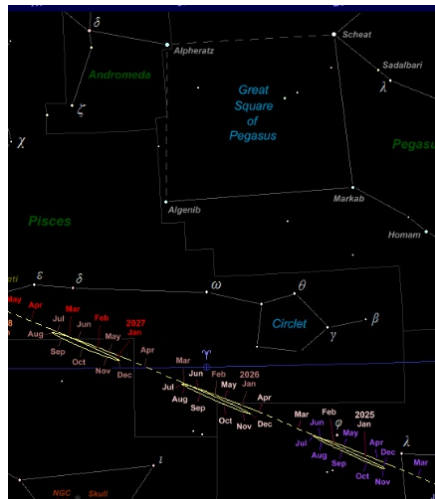
Your Newcastle Emlyn U3A Committee

ASTRONOMY

The Astronomy Group met on our usual 3rd Wed afternoon of the month date – and we started off with our regular review of the easy-to-see planets and stars. The nights start earlier now so looking at the sky in the evening is much easier (weather permitting). As in October, Saturn is in the SE soon after sunset and progresses across the sky to be in the SW at bedtime. It is about 20o to 30o above the horizon and, except for the Moon, it is the brightest object in that southerly direction. Also, like last month, it is also just below the 4 bright-ish stars that comprise the unmistakable Great Square of Pegasus.

And we don't have to wait long for much brighter Jupiter to put in an appearance in the East. It rises at about 9pm, with Orion just to its west in the SE, (the bright 7-star asterism with red Betelgeuse at its top left, bluish Rigel at its bottom right, and the 3-star "belt" in the middle). Jupiter is also still close to, and just below. Pollux and Castor- the Gemini Twins. With all the other stars around it, Jupiter moves westwards 'til lost in sunlight in the West at sunrise. It gets much higher in the sky than Saturn, reaching almost 60o above the horizon around 2am.

Whilst considering these two planets we discussed their apparent movement against the (much more distant) background stars. Every year and a bit, planets like Saturn and Jupiter seem to stop their progressive movement eastwards as their orbits round the sun take them through the constellations – they stop, move westwards for about 4 or 5 months, stop again, and then resume their eastward progression. During this backwards looping the planets are said to be "in retrograde" – and it arises because the much-faster Earth is also orbiting the Sun (in a year, of course) and we see Saturn and Jupiter in front of the background stars from angles on both sides of the Sun. This causes the "looping" of their apparent motion.



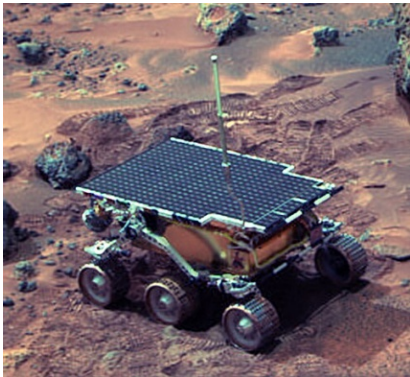
Saturn's movement through the constellations from March 2024 to April 2027 is shown above. It ceased being "in retrograde" last week (Nov 28th) and will move forwards (eastwards) until July 26th, before going "retrograde"

again until Dec 10th next year. Jupiter, further over to the east in the constellation Gemini, entered its own retrograde phase on Nov 11th, and it won't move forwards again until March.

We then had a look at Jon's chosen Constellation of the Month and also his choice of Lunar Object, but the bulk of the meeting was a review of the Mars Landers, Orbiters and Rovers, and some of the science we have learned about Mars from these 30 or so missions. There is far too much to reproduce here but a few bits of history are as follows.

NASA has been behind most of the successful missions, going back to the Viking 1 & 2 Landers and Orbiters back in 1976. Landers are static, of course, and the Vikings did their experiments from those landing points and sent results back for years, 6½ years in the case of Viking 1. Jumping forward to 1997, NASA sent its first rover, Sojourner, mounted on the main lander, Mars Pathfinder. It was just 2 feet long but was the first robotic vehicle to operate anywhere outside Earth – and it explored Mars' surface for 3 months before its batteries failed.

Then came the very successful pair of identical rovers, Spirit and Opportunity, in 2004 – shown below, with their much smaller, simpler predecessor, Sojourner



Spirit explored for just over 6 years before getting stuck in a sand pit, but Opportunity operated for 14 years – 50x its planned life – until the famous dust-storm of 2018 fatally covered its solar panels.

The most recent rovers have naturally produced the best scientific results. Car-sized Curiosity has been roving and drilling since 2012, and its more up-to-date version, Perseverance, since 2021. Both have radioactive energy generators instead of solar cells, so can avoid the power problems caused by wind-blown dust.

Perseverance had its little helicopter, Ingenuity, which made 72 flights through the rarefied Martian atmosphere before damaging its rotor (but that was 67 more flights than it was designed for!).



Enormous amounts of data have been received about Mars' atmosphere, its geology, its seismic activity, and its water-ice content. Rock and dust samples have been retained by both Curiosity and Perseverance in anticipation of future collection by robotic there-and-back missions – though these now seem to be in abeyance as NASA has been directed to concentrate on manned Moon and Mars missions during Trump's presidency.

If a manned mission does take place, we now know there is plenty of water on Mars in enormous buried ice-sheets at mid-latitudes - as well as in the polar ice-caps and at the bottom of craters and canyons. So much ice that, if melted, it would cover the complete surface of Mars to a depth of 30-60 meters. So water availability is likely to be the least of the astronauts' problems if they do get there and spend time on the surface.

The next Astronomy Group meeting will be on Wed, 21 January at 2pm in Lechryd's Coracle Hall. Please come and join us if you are interested, or ring 0777-167 4578 if you want more information.

- Galileo

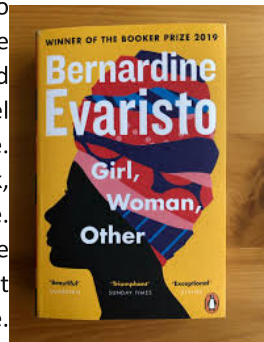
BADMINTON/PICKLEBALL

Our session on wednesdays are increasingly popular whilst Fridays have a bit more space if you would like to give it a go please get in touch (camb5@sky.com 07447440841) we hold sessions on Wednesdays at 12 and Fridays at 5-30 at Landysul leisure centre.

Nigel

BOOK CLUB

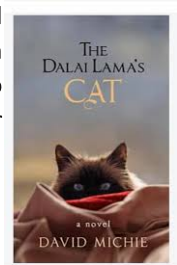
We chose *Girl, Woman, Other* by Bernardine Evaristo to read in November. Evaristo is a British born, mixed race writer of numerous books, short stories, poems, plays and essays. She is Professor of Creative Writing at Brunel University and President of the Royal Society of Literature. She is the recipient of numerous awards for her work, including the MBE and OBE for services to Literature. Evaristo has been included on the Black Powerlist 100 since 2020, which recognises the United Kingdom's most influential people of African or African Caribbean heritage. In 2020, she was included in the one-off list of 100 Great Black Britons.



Girl, Woman, Other follows the lives of each of 12 principal characters. The book is divided into four chapters, each containing episodes about three of them, who are connected directly to one another in some way, showing how their lives intertwine. The themes explored through the characters include racism, feminism, politics, patriarchy, success, relationships, gender, and sexuality. *Girl, Woman, Other* was joint winner (with Margaret Atwood's *The Testaments*) of the 2019 Booker Prize. The Booker judges described the work as "a must-read about modern Britain and womanhood". It is the 12th bestselling hardback fiction book in the UK and was included on the "Big Jubilee Read" list of 70 books selected by a panel of experts, in April 2022, to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of Elizabeth II in June 2022.

There was a wide spread of views about the book within the group, provoking a lengthy discussion. Several of us found the writing style very difficult. Most, but not all, of us found the subject matter interesting, giving us an insight into the lives of some black women from the fifties onwards which was very displaced from our normal lives and experience. One felt that the tone was too preachy. Others thought that having twelve characters made it difficult to follow. Overall we felt there were more plus than minus points.

Our book for December will be *The Dalai Lama's Cat* by David Michie. Just for December, we will be meeting a week earlier than usual, on Tuesday 16th December on zoom, starting at 10.30, to avoid clashes with other Christmas events. We will be back to our normal schedule in January.



You are welcome to join us for a usually, light-hearted discussion about books. Please contact me via the website. Also, if anyone has any reading suggestions we would love to hear from you.

Vicky

CRAFTY CRAFTERS

Unfortunately, Crafty Crafters had to be cancelled in November due to the road outside Penboyr hall being flooded. Hopefully, we will be able to meet in December for our pre-Christmas meeting when we usually take along a few Christmassy nibbles to share. The meeting will be on 10th December.

Ruth

CREATIVE WRITING

As usual, we started with an exercise - members were asked to create a character by first using plasticine to mould a figure of the character. Any reluctance to work with plasticine was soon overcome with chatter of school day memories and swapping different colours of plasticine. The availability of cocktail sticks proved invaluable as arms and legs, javelins, swords and helping the figures stand up.

Each member introduced us to their character and the story about them. The stories related to the action portrayed by the model and were various, from family to agriculture. The members were impressed by the detailed work of some models, but most praise was for the simplicity of a white oval shape with facial features on a stick; and introduced as Yorick. I knew him well.



The reading of the 500 word homework on lust proved once again creative and imaginative.

They ranged from :-

A member who did not like the word and its ambiguous usage and connotations, but would use it if writing an erotic blockbuster.

A woman lusting after her friend's diamond rings.

A mistake made by a new Asian boy at school who, after a race in the school's sports day, told a schoolgirl "I lust after you" when he meant to say " I am last after you.

A poem on Lust Starting I long to be your lipstick, touch your lips.

continued listing other things he longed to do. !

This writer explained that the story was about a lesser of the Ten Commandments. A neighbour who lusted after his beautiful neighbour and succumbed to assaulting her was sent to jail.

December's 500 word homework is on Recycling.

Anyone interested in joining us please email Angela. on blakemore12@btinternet.com

Angela

FAMILY HISTORY

At this month's meeting we were talking about Death Certificates and what they can tell us. We had our usual mixed collection of stories behind the deaths. We have all found a large number of children who died in infancy, often from an illness that has since been eradicated, and sometimes with a birth and death being registered on the same day. I have an example of an ancestor writing his will on the day he died. I was amazed at the graphic detail that was sometimes written on the certificate recounting the circumstances of a death, especially if it was caused by an accident.

Birth and death certificates for England and Wales can be downloaded from the General Record Office via www.gro.gov.uk

This type are much cheaper than ones you send off for (from the same place) but cannot be used for official purposes.

We will not be having our usual meeting in December, but we may have an informal session after Christmas. We have done this in previous years and have taken the opportunity of looking up records for ourselves at the Centre. More details about that will be sent out to Group members nearer the time.

If you would like to join the Group, please contact me - you will be welcome whether you have years of experience or are just starting out.

Margaret

MOTO GROUP

This month seven of us went to Mwldan Cinema in Cardigan to see Downton Abbey. 'The Grande Finale' and 'Time to say Goodbye' was the last of a long series. It portrayed the Historical Drama of the Crawley family in the 1930s. This final saga was both light hearted and extremely witty. Not to mention the fashion and authenticity of that era. All together a very enjoyable afternoon and as we are all fans of Downton Abbey we were not disappointed.



Our Sunday lunch was held at The Emlyn Café, Tanygroes. A small turnout but as usual the food was excellent. Our next lunch will be in February due to the Christmas and New Year Break.

Our usual Coffee Morning was held on the 11th November. Good company, coffee and a chat contributed to a pleasant morning. We will be meeting again on Tuesday 9th December 2025.

Another visit to the Cinema was organised but sadly was cancelled due to weather conditions.

If members who are Living on Their Own would like to join our MOTO group, please contact Cyndy or Felicity through the u3a main group.

Felicity

PATCHWORK AND QUILTING

There were just 4 brave souls who managed to confront the awful weather we had during the second week of November and make it to Penboy hall where, fortunately, the flooded road had been cleared. Those who didn't make it had other commitments that day and had to confront the weather elsewhere.

The next meeting will be 12th December when we hope to take some festive food to share for lunch.

Ruth

PETANQUE

We played both sessions in October with a good turn out for the first one but only three braved the conditions for the second one.

Our season has now finished for this year at least we played more than in 2024. As I use WhatsApp to communicate with all the group I will weather permitting try and get some games on after the Christmas/New year festivities to keep us active. Regular dates I hope to start from April, these will be the first Monday in the month 2pm, and the third Tuesday 1015am as we are now.

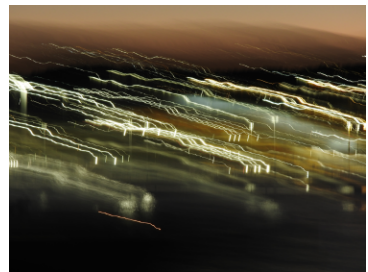
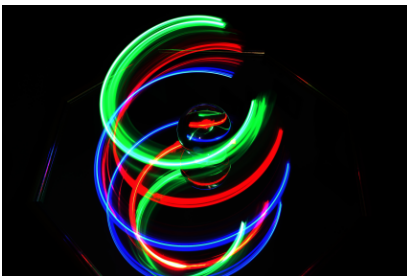
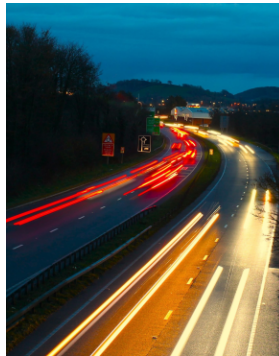
Thank you to everyone who has attended our games this year, and I would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Keep bowling.

Trevor

PHOTOGRAPHY

The homework for November was movement and light. The resulting photos taken by our members were fantastic and it was very interesting to hear how they were achieved. We will not be holding a meeting in December so the next meeting is on 28n January at the Coracle Hall, Llechryd at 1430 hrs. The homework for Dec/Jan is Christmas and Winter Scenes.



Pete & Ian

STROLLERS

Our November Walk was at Llandysul. Despite the poor forecast, fourteen of us, along with Maisie, Rosie and Dilly, met at the car park/tennis courts near the library.

Led by Melvin, thank you, we set off walking along the street through the town. We turned off by the Outdoor Kit for U building and followed the path along the river, and up a short incline to the side of a field. We then followed a country lane back towards the town. We then walked across Llandysul bridge and followed the path at the side of the river along and back. The weather hadn't been at bad as the forecast, by when we were walking back along the river path, the rain got very heavy so we decided to cut the walk a bit shorter than intended, and made our way back through the town to the car park.

(Editors note having had a couple of Beardies in the past not the best of days to take one for a walk)



The walk was approx. three miles. Following the walk seven of us and a guest went to Ffostrasol Arms for lunch. We had an informal meeting regarding next year's walks list whilst waiting for lunch to arrive and then enjoyed a lovely meal.

This was our last walk for 2025, I will send the new list out in January, ready for our first walk of 2026 on Friday 30th January. Anyone wishing to join the Strollers is most welcome, please email me on pamjwalks@aol.com for more information

Pam

TABLE TENNIS

We will only be meeting once in December Tuesday 9th and that will be for our annual fun tournament. There will be prizes and mince pies. Christmas attire is essential. Our normal twice-monthly sessions will resume in January.

New members welcome.

Margaret

WELSH GROUP

We braved the dreadful weather for our meeting in November to continue talking about the parts of our and other people's bodies. In this session we were practising asking and answering questions such as 'What is this?' and 'What are these?' in relation to our heads, toes and everything in between. These are useful questions to remember as they can also be useful in shops and markets.

We are going to have a complete change next month. As it is the run up to Christmas, we will be looking at some Christmas Carols and other hymns in Welsh, as well as understanding the words of the National Anthem. We will do our best with the Welsh, but I can't answer for the singing.

Our next session will be on Tuesday 2nd December, starting at 10.30 at Capel Iwan village hall.

Vicky

WINE APPRECIATION

In November we decided to do something a little bit different and take one type of wine but from all over the world to see how they varied. We chose to buy Sauvignon Blanc wine and allocated different countries to each participant. There were a total of 8 different countries but unfortunately (**REALLY!!!!**) due to the first snow of the winter only 4 were represented at our meeting. We tasted wine from South Africa, France, New Zealand and Argentina. They were all well liked but were definitely slightly different from each country. The favourite was actually a Sauvignon Blanc from the Loire valley in France called Abbesse.

The roots of Sauvignon Blanc are thought to lie in the Loire Valley where the grape was first mentioned in 1534 by writer François Rabelais (it was called "Fiers"). Apparently, it was a good cure for constipation – really!

6 Fun Facts About Sauvignon Blanc

On the Wine Day Calendar, May 3rd is International Sauvignon Blanc Day.

Sauvignon Blanc likely derived its moniker from the French word "Sauvage," meaning wild, as the vines are reminiscent of wild grapevines.

Surprisingly, Sauvignon Blanc is a parent (progenitor) of Cabernet Sauvignon.

The "green" aromatics in Sauvignon Blanc come from compounds called methoxy-pyrazines. By the way, Cabernet Sauvignon also has these same flavours (it runs in the family!)

Until the 1980s, most of the Sauvignon Blanc in Chile turned out to be Sauvignon Vert (aka Sauvignonasse), mistakenly brought over from Bordeaux.

Sauvignon Blanc is cat pee! It's caused by a unique chemical compound, 4MMP. There aren't many other scents like it!

We will be having our annual Christmas buffet at 12.00 on Thursday 15th December at Les and Lesley's.

Hazel

WRITE NOW

At our November meeting, the 'Poem of the Month' was 'Naming of Parts' by Henry Reed and our 'Ten Minute Writing Task' took the inspiration of a journey.

Our Christmas meeting will be on 8th of December when we will share nibbles and non- alcoholic drinks - festive hats optional! Venue the Church of the Latter-day Saints 11am - 1:00 pm as usual.

The homework topic for December is 'Nightmare'. We will also be workshopping some more of Gwyn's novel in greater depth at this meeting. Copies have been circulated to members via Beacon - so please have notes of your comments ready to give him - a variety of viewpoints is really helpful.

November's homework was to write about an autumn celebration or tradition. Two members contributions follow: 'Thanksgiving' by Dave Brown and 'The Match' by Miranda Hudson

Thanksgiving

A floral wreath adorns the door.

Coloured lights straddle rooftops.

Night falls, they sparkle like diamonds, iridescent.

Russet leaves, cover the walkways and streets.

A prelude to Jack Frost and the winter ahead.

Thanksgiving, a time to reflect on the year that's passed.

We give thanks for all our blessings,
spare a thought to those who cannot be here,
their absence heartfelt.

In the kitchen, a feast being made.

A butterball turkey and all the trimmings.

Family and friends start to arrive, handshakes and hugs.

Pre-dinner snacks all in place.

A Thanksgiving tradition,

NFL on the wide screen TV.

The Kansas City Chiefs, the current Super Bowl champions.

The commentator says, “Mahomes to Kelce, touchdown”.

Superbowl sixty is in their sights.

We dance with joy, cheering them on.

“Come on the Chiefs, Champions, Champions.”

The faithful fans give thanks

The Match

Albie wrenched his attention back to his teacher. He’d been watching the clock, still only quarter past ten, another fifteen minutes before break. Fifteen whole minutes before the most important event of his life.

At last the tinny sound of the bell resonated through the corridors. One heaving mass of woolly jumpers, knees and boots, stamped outside. Albie waited, letting the stampede clear. He checked his satchel. Satisfied, he slung it over his shoulder and followed his classmates, one laceless boot dragging.

He paused in the autumn sun at the edge of the schoolyard, breath fogging. The arena was a far corner of the yard, shaded by coppery trees. Neither competitor could complain of sun blinding.

Raucous chatter plunged into deep silence when the boys noticed him. Their eyes tracked his progress. Step, drag, step, drag. Not the most dignified entrance. He’d had to sacrifice a bootlace that morning. Albie could see his opponent, stood a pace in front of the crowd, arms folded tight against the chill. Chin set in defiance. Last year’s champion.

Last year had been a tragedy. Albie had been reigning champion for three years, but last year, he was beaten in the final game. Oliver Runcorn. The new boy. With big school looming – did they even play conkers at big school, Albie wondered – he had to win his title back. He just had to.

‘Perhaps you’ve become a little complacent’ his mum had said as she’d tried to kiss away his defeat. Recovered from crushing disappointment, he’d thought hard about her words.

So this year, this tournament, Albie had given it his all. Not taken anything for granted. He’d gone the extra two miles up to Gipsy Corner where the best horse chestnuts grew. He’d resisted the temptation to soak his weapons in vinegar, no good would come of cheating. It was up to him now. He pushed down anxiety. Don’t worry, he told himself. He’d won all the heats this week, deserved to win.

Reaching the semi-circle of ruddy faces, Albie put his satchel down behind him, his best friends Tommy and Jim slapping his back in greeting and encouragement. Drawing out his best conker, newly threaded, he shook hands with Oliver and they squared up to each other. The referee tossed a coin. Oliver won.

Albie shuffled his feet to improve his stance, holding his arm out straight. Large, shiny conker shivering slightly with his pulse. The whistle blew and the game began.

Oliver, bigger than Albie, leaned back and raised his hands, lace taught. Thwack! Albie’s conker survived the blow, spinning wildly like a furious colt. But there were two more to go before he would have his chance. Everyone ‘oohed’ when Oliver’s second strike missed, the third hit home but no cracks.

Albie rearranged his feet, took a steadying breath. Looked hard into his opponent’s eyes. Nobody breathed. Drawing back the conker as far as it would stretch from his other hand, he took aim and struck. A hit, but no crack. Another shot, another hit, still no crack. Last chance. Albie rubbed the conker, blew on it for good luck. Ready.... Aim.... Whack!! A roar erupted from the thrilled onlookers. Albie saw Oliver’s conker shattered on the ground, pulpy green insides splattered over boots. Before he could blink, Tommy and Jim hoisted him onto their shoulders and paraded him in a lap of triumph. Albie grinned down into the laughing faces til, when he met the eye of Oliver Runcorn, they exchanged a thin smile of mutual respect. Albie was champion again.

Julie

What's On in Newcastle Emlyn u3a

Day		Venue	Time
WEEK 1	GROUP		
Monday	Hitch Hikers Guide to Theology	Ffostrasol Village Hall	14.00
Tuesday	Welsh	Capel Iwan Village Hall	10-30
Tuesday	Bowls	NCE Bowls Club	14-00
Wednesday	Badminton	Llandysul Leisure Centre	12-15
Wednesday	Pickleball	Llandysul Leisure Centre	12-15
Thursday	Art	Penboyr Village Hall	10-00
WEEK 2			
Monday	Walkers	Contact Group Leader for details	10.30
Monday	Write Now	Church of the later Day Saints Newcastle Emlyn	11.00
Monday	Don't Get Me Started	Sue's in Pontgarreg	14.00
Monday	Bowls	Bowls Club Newcastle Emlyn	14.00
Tuesday	MOTO (members on their own)	Various venues	10.00
Tuesday	Sketchers	National Wool Museum Drefach Velindre	10-00
Tuesday	Table Tennis	Rhydlewis Village Hall	14-00
Wednesday	Strictly Basic Ballroom	NCE Holy Trinity Church Hall	10-30
Wednesday	Badminton	Llandysul Leisure Centre	12-15
Wednesday	Pickleball	Llandysul Leisure Centre	12-15
Wednesday	Crafty Crafters	Penboyr Village Hall	10-30
Thursday	Art	Art - Penboyr Village Hall	10-00
Thursday	Creative Writng	Rhydlewis Village Hall	11-00
Friday	Patchwork & Quilting	Penboyr Village Hall	11-00
Sunday	MOTO (members on their own)	Various locations for Sunday lunch	12.30
WEEK 3			
Monday	Bowls	Bowls Club Newcastle Emlyn	14.00
Tuesday	Games	Penboyr Village Hall	10-30
Tuesday	Book Club	Zoom meeting	10-30
Wednesday	Pickleball	Llandysul Leisure Centre	12-15
Wednesday	Badminton	Llandysul Leisure Centre	12.15
Thursday	Art	Penboyr Village Hall	10-00
Thursday	Philosophy	Penrhiwllan Village Hall	11-00
Thursday	Wine Appreciation	Various locations	14-00
WEEK 4			
Monday	Science	Phat Forks Cenarth Falls Resort	14-00
Tuesday	French	Sue's in Penrhiwllan	11-00
Wednesday	Photography	Coracle Hall Llechryd	14-30
	5 WEEK MONTH ONLY		
Thursday	Art	Penboyr Village Hall	10.00

To add events to this monthly calendar please contact Nigel neu3anewsletter@hotmail.com giving date, venue and time, plus any further information to assist those wishing to attend. Closing date for newsletter contributions will be on the 24th of the month, at the latest.