

# Writing proves escape from school bullies



Swansea poet Natalie Holborow.

## Geraint Thomas

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DYLAN Thomas is proving to be a good muse for an up and coming Swansea poet.

Natalie Holborow became interested in poetry after discovering Dylan, his work has influenced her style and, more recently, she has been appointed poet in residence at his Cwmdonkin Drive childhood home.

On top of all that, like her hero, she is making

waves in the poetry world and she has ambitions to study the Swansea-born poet's work as part of a PhD in the future.

However, anyone who has read Blood Sugar, the poem which landed the 24-year-old this year's Terry Hetherington Award, will see she is a talented wordsmith in her own right.

The former Penyrheol Comprehensive pupil, who is also a graduate of Swansea University's MA Creative Writing programme, says: "I was bullied in school and my escape was writing; I used to put all my passion into it.

"It was generally prose back then and poetry

didn't become an interest until I was 18 and a friend showed me Dylan Thomas's Love in the Asylum. It's not because he is native to Swansea, there are lots of other poets from Swansea, it's the mark he made on modernist poetry and how relevant it still is when you read it. I also read Sylvia Plath and from then on it was all poetry."

Of her recent success she says: "It was a nice surprise. I wrote Blood Sugar about my experience with diabetes, I wasn't sure whether to submit it or not because it's so personal, but I'm glad I did because it helps to raise awareness."

## It wasn't her only success in the competition



with her poem Jackdaws being highly commended last year.

Natalie credits the late Nigel Jenkins, who was her poetry tutor in Swansea University, as being a help to her development.

She says: "It was the last poem that Nigel Jenkins had a look at for me, so it's dedicated to him."

She says: "I heard about the vacancy so I went along and gave them some of my work, along with a few ideas of what I would like to do and it just went from there. It's an amazing experience reading in Dylan's home, it has such a brilliant atmosphere, it's probably one of my favourite places to read."

And reading her work is another passion, as she explains: "The spoken word, the delivery, is really important; a lot of people who are not really into poetry come along to readings and say, 'I didn't know that poetry was like that'.

"To hear the words, that's what brings it alive. That's when you hear the musicality of it. I really enjoy performing; I used to be quite shy but you find it really brings out your confidence."

Returning to the Dylan theme, Natalie, who is currently working on a novel set in Swansea based around two teenagers, would like to do a PhD in the future.

She says: "There's not much written about the females in Dylan Thomas's work, although there are some, I want to look at his maternal influences."

Finally what does she think her muse would make of poetry today?

She says: "I think there has been a massive revival, especially across South Wales and in Swansea in particular. At the moment there seems to be a poetry evening going on at least once a week. I would say go along to an open mic session, they tend to be friendly and a lot of fun, and if you ever want to have a go at reading your own poems they are very encouraging."

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— Natalie Holborow