

Meet the 24-year-old Swansea City fan who could be the next big thing in Welsh literature

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Natalie Ann Holborow has won the prestigious Robin Reeves Prize for Young Writers...could she be Wales' next literary star?

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Natalie Ann Holborow has won the prestigious Robin Reeves Prize for Young Writers...could she be Wales' next literary star?

She's a cat-loving [Swansea City](#) fan – and now 24-year-old Natalie Ann Holborow can call herself an award-winning writer.

So could the up-and-coming [Swansea](#) wordsmith become Wales' next literary star?

Natalie will be presented with the Robin Reeves Prize – given in memory of [Robin Reeves](#), editor of New Welsh Review for a decade – in Cardiff this weekend for her short story The

Bees, which was contained in the Parthian-published anthology *How to Get out of a Burning Building*.

Writer Rachel is backing Natalie

She will get her £500 first prize on Sunday at an awards ceremony at **Chapter**, Cardiff's popular arts centre.

Runners-up Eve Elizabeth Moriarty and Mari Ellis Dunning will receive £100 and £50 respectively.



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And **Rachel Trezise**, the **Rhondda**-born inaugural Dylan Thomas Prize-winning author, believes the young writer has bags of talent.

One of the judges of the Robin Reeves Prize, Rachel said of Natalie's work: "In the winning story *The Bees* her voice thunders out like a force of nature.

'A surprise and an honour'

"And while 'voice' may sound like a tremendously basic facet, we must remember how difficult voice is to master as a young writer."



Author Rachel Trezise

Natalie, who looks after a number of cats at her Swansea home and who is an avid fan of the Swans, said: “Winning the Robin Reeves Prize was both a surprise and an honour.

“I find it so exciting that there’s so much support like this for young writers in Wales – the Welsh literary scene has such a range of unique voices and competitions like this give us that valued opportunity.”

Natalie is an MA graduate in Creative Writing from Swansea University and is currently writer-in-residence at the Dylan Thomas Birthplace.

'I was eight years old and vanishing'

By day she works with words as an Instructional Designer, and by night she is compere of Mad As Birds, a monthly spoken word and music open mic event in Swansea.

She is also the winner of this year’s Swansea-based Terry Hetherington Young Writers’ Award for her poem Blood Sugar.

The poem describes being eight years old and being diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes.

Part of the poem goes: “I was eight years old and vanishing, I must have been vanishing, I thought then, looking back at my own eyes, dark as pansies, knees awkward as doorknobs in saggy leggings.”

Work published in Cheval 8

She has also been highly commended for various other prizes including the Bridport Prize, the Hippocrates Prize and the Jane Martin Poetry Prize and was longlisted for the National Poetry Prize 2015.



The house in Cwmdonkin Drive where Dylan Thomas was born

Natalie has recently been published in The Stinging Fly and the New Welsh Review and her poem Bite and short story Vinegar have appeared in the anthology Cheval 8.

She said she would love to see her debut poetry collection edited, the first draft of her novel written – and to see the Swans move up in the league table by 2017.

A spokeswoman for publishers **Parthian** said: “The Welsh Writers’ Trust Robin Reeves prize is in memory of Robin, who was a passionate advocate of developing Wales’ identity both culturally and politically.

Journalist Robin Reeves

“Young writers entering the prize were invited to submit on the theme ‘Out of the Ashes – Overcoming Adversity’.”

Robin Reeves was a Welsh political activist and journalist who died of cancer aged 59 in 2001.

As well as being editor of New Welsh Review he was a co-editor of the cultural magazine Arcade in the early 1980s, a founding member of the Welsh Union of Writers and the St

David's Forum and a [Plaid Cymru](#) councillor in the Vale of Glamorgan.

The anthology *How to Exit a Burning Building* (Parthian, £7.99) is being launched this weekend at the Chapter Arts Centre.

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