

Scottish Book Trust New Writers Award 2016



And the good news is that over half of them are based in Edinburgh!

Six Edinburgh-based writers have come one step closer to having their work published, after being named today as the recipients of a [Scottish Book Trust New Writers Award 2016](#).

Greg Whelan, Louise Peterkin, P.M. Freestone, Rachel Plummer, Robert McGinty and Sarah Urwin Jones are six of the 11 recipients of the coveted award, run by Scottish Book Trust in association with Creative Scotland.

The awards provide a selection of talented, unpublished writers with financial support to enable them to concentrate on developing their work, as well as professional guidance to help them move towards publication. The Callan Gordon Award, set up to celebrate the life of young Scottish writer Callan Gordon, provides an additional space on the programme every two years for a short story writer or poet between the ages of 18 and 35.

Each recipient receives a £2,000 cash award and support tailored to their needs including mentoring from writers and industry professionals, training in public relations, social media and performance and the opportunity to show their work to publishers and agents. The awards also include a week-long retreat at [Cove Park](#). The retreat provides time, space and the freedom to create new work in idyllic surroundings.

We met up with two of them when the news was just sinking in about winning the awards. First we met Rachel Plummer.

Rachel Plummer (31) a poet from Oxfords, was born in London, grew up in East Anglia and Paris, and has spent most of her adult life in Edinburgh, where she lives with her husband and two young children. She has had poetry published in magazines including Agenda, RAUM, Skylark Review and Dactyl. She is a Troubadour prizewinner and was runner up in the 2014 Penfro Poetry Competition. In 2015 she was second runner up for Canterbury Festival's Poet of the Year award. Her sonnet 'Potterrow' was selected by Sir Andrew Motion to be displayed on public transport as part of the Poetry on the Move scheme. She is currently working on a first collection of poems. **Commenting on her award, Plummer said:**

"I was delighted! Recognition of this sort is hugely encouraging and motivating. I'm grateful to Scottish Book Trust for the opportunities this year presents."

[The Edinburgh Reporter NEWS](#) from [Phyllis Stephen](#) on [Vimeo](#).

We also met up with Robert McGinty who is an Edinburgh based writer.

Robert McGinty (41), is a young adult fiction writer who lives in the Hillside area of Edinburgh and works in insurance. He grew up in Fife, studied English Literature and History in Edinburgh and Information Studies in Aberdeen. His first novel *Hell Money* was shortlisted for the 2005 Wow Factor, a competition run by Waterstones and Faber for debut children's novelists. He is currently working on his second Young Adult novel, *The Dead Men of Pendragon House*, an adventure based on an updated version of the Arthurian legends of Thomas Malory. **Commenting on his award, McGinty commented:**

"I am absolutely delighted to win a Scottish Book Trust New Writers Award. It is a real boost to my confidence and an encouragement to keep working hard. Writing can be a solitary pursuit and it is wonderful to have this outside recognition."

[The Edinburgh Reporter NEWS](#) from [Phyllis Stephen](#) on [Vimeo](#).

Other winners from Edinburgh include:

Greg Whelan (28), a fiction writer from the Dean Bridge area of the city, is a Book Shop Manager at Waterstones. Born and raised in Methil, Fife, he moved to Edinburgh at the age of 17 to study English Literature and has since earned an MSc with Distinction in Creative Writing and his PhD in Creative Writing, both from the University of Edinburgh. In 2006 he won the Sloan Prize for Writings in the Scottish Vernacular and has since had short stories published in various collections. He has spent the past ten years writing for the pure love of it, and has written many short stories while putting together three novels. **Commenting on the award, Whelan said:**

"I'm absolutely honoured. For years, I've been writing because I simply loved doing it. However, since finishing my PhD, I've felt that it was time for the next step. This award is a huge vote of confidence from the Scottish Book Trust and I plan to take full advantage of such an incredible experience."

Louise Peterkin (34), a poet from the Dalry area of the city, is a Library Assistant at the University of Edinburgh. She was born and bred in Edinburgh has since performed at many poetry venues including Blind Poetics, TenRed and an event at St Cecilia's Hall as part of the Edinburgh Festival. Most recently she was featured in the new poet slot at Shore Poets. She has been involved in a creative writing workshop for Advanced Higher Students and has been published as part of the Vers poetry anthology and in New Writing Scotland 34: The Rooftop Busker. **Commenting on the award, Peterkin said:**

"I was astonished and beyond thrilled to receive the award and am very excited as to what the forthcoming year may bring. It's hard to convey the boost in confidence such validation gives you."

P.M. Freestone, a young adult fiction writer, grew up in

Australia and now works for the University of Edinburgh. She has published a handful of short stories (including work in anthologies from Penguin Books), and is now developing several novel-length projects. She is a member of Scottish PEN and the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators. A self-proclaimed nerd, since childhood she has been intrigued with all things speculative—her writing is littered with apocalypses, alternate histories and fantastical occurrences. She is also a graduate of the Clarion Writers' Workshop (University of California, San Diego), a qualified archaeologist and a doctor of something philosophical.

Commenting on her award, Freestone said:

"My first reaction was 'are you serious?!' The early stages of a writing career can be fraught with doubt, so to have this encouragement from Scottish Book Trust is a huge boost. I'm incredibly thankful to be one of their New Writers in 2016, and I'm excited about further developing my craft through the Award's fantastic opportunities."

Sarah Urwin Jones is a narrative non-fiction writer, arts journalist and classical music critic from North Edinburgh. Born in London, she studied French and European History at Edinburgh University and the Sorbonne, Paris before going on to postgraduate study at St. Andrews University in Mediaeval Art History. She writes regularly for many national newspapers and magazines, has been The Times' Classical Music Critic for Scotland for many years and writes fortnightly on visual art for The Herald. She was formerly Theatre Critic for The Independent and has contributed as a subject specialist to Chambers Biographical Dictionary. **Commenting on the award, Urwin Jones said:**

"I am incredibly delighted and very surprised to have received this award – my feet still hadn't touched the ground a week after the phone call. I am hugely excited about all the opportunities of the coming year, from the writing time that this award offers to meeting and working with a mentor."

Wonderful.”

The judging panel, including authors Jess Richards, Lesley McDowell, John Glenday, Gerry Cambridge, Chae Strathie and Cat Clarke, reviewed over 450 entries before selecting the final 11.

Caitrin Armstrong, Head of Writer Development at Scottish Book Trust, said:

“It’s a tricky world out there for an unpublished writer. For the majority of people finding the time to write is increasingly difficult and making it out of the slush pile can be almost impossible. The New Writers Awards give talented writers a leg up, freeing time, providing an introduction to the writing community and getting them noticed. The 2016 writers are a talented bunch and we are really looking forward to seeing where this year will take them.”

Aly Barr, Acting Head of Literature, Languages and Publishing, said:

“Each year the New Writers Award winners provide a bellwether for the next generation of writing from Scotland; the achievements of previous winners is a testament to this. The 2016 winners look set to continue Scottish Book Trust’s tremendous record of picking writers that innovate, excite and challenge. It can truly be regarded as Scotland’s ‘ones to watch’ list for literature.”

Scottish Book Trust is also currently working with the Gaelic Book Council on a project which will support two New Gaelic Writers each year.