

Each month we will focus on an inspiring author based in or writing about Wales! You'll have an introduction to their latest book, what inspires them to write, and any advice they have for young writers!

Get to know

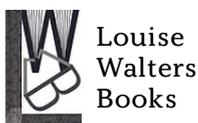
Cath Barton



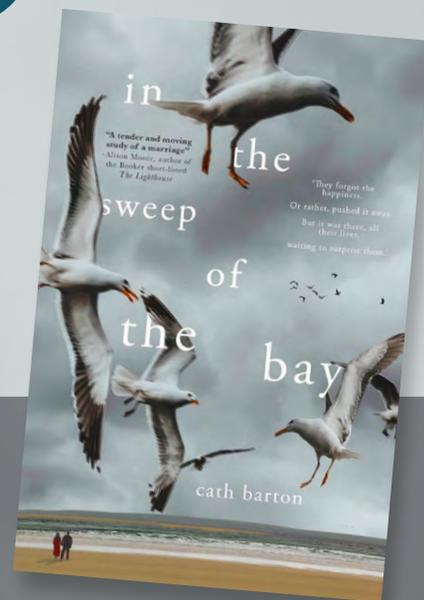
Cath Barton is an English writer living in Wales. She is the author of three novellas: *The Plankton Collector* (2018, New Welsh Review), winner of the New Welsh Writing Awards AmeriCymru Prize for the Novella 2017, *In the Sweep of the Bay* (2020, Louise Walters Books) shortlisted for Best Novella in the Saboteur Awards 2021, and *Between the Virgin and the Sea* (forthcoming, Novella Express, Leamington Books). Her short stories are published in *The Lonely Crowd*, *Strix* and a number of anthologies. Cath is active in the online flash fiction community.

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Summary:

This warm-hearted tale explores marriage, love, and longing, set against the majestic backdrop of Morecambe Bay, the Lakeland Fells, and the faded splendour of the Midland Hotel.

Ted Marshall meets Rene in the dancehalls of Morecambe and they marry during the frail optimism of the 1950s. They adopt the roles expected of man and wife at the time: he the breadwinner at the family ceramics firm, and she the loyal housewife. But as the years go by, they find themselves wishing for more...

After Ted survives a heart attack, both see it as a new beginning... but can a faded love like theirs ever be rekindled?

What inspired you to write *In the Sweep of the Bay*?

I had written a short flash fiction piece about an elderly couple having a day out in Morecambe. The piece was a snapshot of their marriage and I found I wanted to know more about their lives. I'd only visited Morecambe for a day, but a strong memory of it stayed with me and I felt inspired to set what became the novella *In the Sweep of the Bay* there.

Tell us a little about the story ...

The couple I wrote about in the initial flash, Ted and Rene, are at the centre of the story, and I take the reader through their long marriage and show you their hopes and their disappointments. Although it's completely fictional and not the story of my parents, I did want to show how different life could be for men and women in the 1950s and 60s. There's also a story in counterpoint about a gay man from a younger generation. I wanted to contrast the different experiences – the stories are linked by ceramics, the industry in which Ted works. To find out exactly how, you need to read the book!

What book is currently on your bedside table?

I'm just about to start reading French-Moroccan author Leila Slimani's third novel, *The Country of Others*. She has great insight into the experiences of women – for me her novel *Adèle* is the twenty-first century *Madame Bovary*.

If you could invite any three people for dinner, whom would you invite?

I would like to ask J B Priestley, to talk about how he sees time, Patricia Highsmith, to help me with plotting, and Esmé Young (currently a judge on the TV series *The Great British Sewing Bee*) to hear about her life in fashion. Whether they would get on with one another I seriously doubt though!

... more Q&As
on the website libraries.wales