

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

## Nigel Jarrett

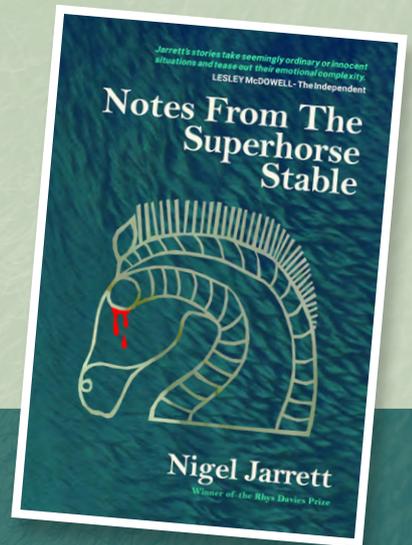


Nigel Jarrett is a former daily-newspaperman and a double prizewinner: the Rhys Davies Award for short fiction and the inaugural Templar Shorts award. His first story collection, *Funderland*, was widely praised. His debut poetry collection, *Miners At The Quarry Pool*, was described by Agenda poetry magazine as 'a virtuoso performance'. Jarrett's first novel, *Slowly Burning*, was published in 2016, as was his second story collection, *Who Killed Emil Kreisler?* In 2019 Templar published his story pamphlet *A Gloucester Trilogy*. Saron Publishers has just brought out his much-awaited long-fiction work, *Notes From the Superhorse Stable*, and Cockatrice Books is due to publish his fourth story collection, *Five Go To Switzerland*, this autumn. Jarrett also writes for *Jazz Journal*, *Acumen* poetry magazine, and many others. His work is included in the Library of Wales's anthology of 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century short fiction. He lives in Monmouthshire.

### Summary:

*Some 'resting' actors write books; some make snow globes; others train their memories. I joined the Ancestry website...*

Thus does Francis Taylor explain how he came to know former coal-miner Harold, a distant and virtually unknown relative. Beyond a career that began as the lead horse in the play *Equus* and virtually ended after he was attacked by a pig while making a TV documentary about medieval life, Francis begins constructing a notated drama of his own into which the animal kingdom strays as if auditioning for parts. But Harold is not a well man...



### Where do you draw writing inspiration from?

John Updike believed that a writer was simply a reader who 'wanted to get in on the act'. In other words, writers for him were inspired by reading, by what had been written by others. I agree. But my writing inspiration is also drawn from my life as a newspaperman.

I was paid for the enjoyable activity of turning into written words, into news, what I'd been delegated to observe. It was therefore easy for me to do the same for my own ideas and emotions, and any need I had to explore, dramatise, and formalise them. It just happened that I was one of those journalists who read a lot and was encouraged to write by what I'd read and by how it was possible, as if from nothing, to 'make' something fictional with words. (Jokers will say that that's what newspaper reporters do all the time!)

### What comes first for you – the plot or characters – and why?

Characters, every time. For me, they dictate the plot, such as it is at any given moment. In *Notes From the Superhorse Stable*, it was a while before I realised that the so-called 'animal kingdom' was making a pitch for inclusion. It began with the narrator's performance in *Equus*, a play about the savage blinding of horses by a disturbed adolescent with a spike, and continued with a care home resident called Bob Berridge, a former bookmaker, who'd written something about the mysterious disappearance of the racehorse Shergar. The animals are as much characters as the human ones. It's almost magical realism. But not quite.

### How would you encourage children and young people to read more for pleasure?

I think there's a link to be established or strengthened. It can begin at home but it mostly begins in school. Schools should be encouraged to form reading clubs, if they are not doing that already, as places where reading as an out-of-classroom pleasure can be promoted. Part of this exercise would involve direct appeals to parents, discounts on the price of books for children belonging to the clubs, and competitions and prizes for 'reviews' of books read. It's important not to confine reading to 'literature': books on many other subjects – technical, sports, natural history, adventure – can encourage the reading habit.



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