

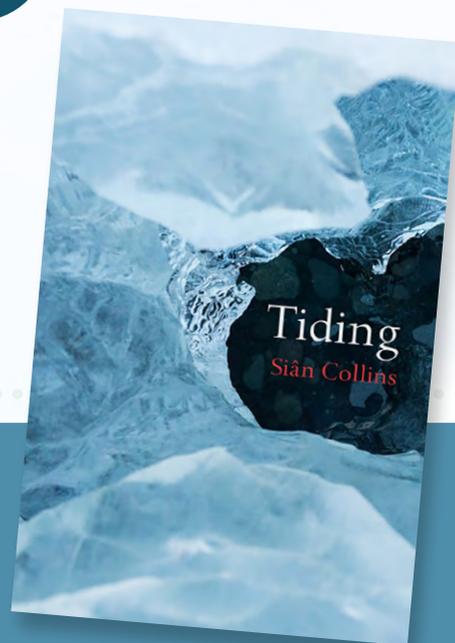
Each month we will focus on an inspiring author based in or writing about Wales! You'll have an introduction to their latest book, what inspires them to write, and any advice they have for young writers!

Get to know

Siân Collins



Born in St David's, Pembrokeshire, and raised in Carmarthenshire, Siân has lived much of her life outside Wales. An Edinburgh University graduate, she has taught Anglo Saxon and Medieval Literature to university students in South Africa, worked as an assistant editor on the medical journal *The Lancet*, and ran English and Drama departments in several well-known London secondary schools. In 2007 she returned to Wales to teach and write in the Tywi valley. Her first novel *Unleaving*, set in Carmarthenshire and South Africa in the 1920s, was published in November 2019.



Summary:

December 1962. Eleanor O'Dowd, a middle-aged piano teacher, is found stabbed and bludgeoned to death. As the Great Freeze of 1963 takes hold, local vicar's daughter Daphne Morgan finds herself forced to navigate the confusing currents of the adult world, where she must face up to her own crimes and what she knows about the murder. *Tiding* will be published by Honno in January 2023.

What inspired you to write *Tiding*?

An unsolved murder case in the early 1950s, in the small town where I grew up. I'd wanted to write a novel set in a Welsh community during the winter of 1963 and this gave me a jumping off point. The events, places and people I describe are all fictional but have their roots in a particular time and a particular landscape.

Tell us a little about the story ...

Dusk on a late afternoon in early December. A group of children steal an ancient skull from the churchyard bone house. Their local piano teacher is bludgeoned to death by an unknown assailant. Are these events mysteriously connected? Haunted by the words of an ancient prophecy, Daphne Morgan and her friends believe they are responsible. 'Cursed be he who moves my body; thereof cometh death, flood and pestilence.' When suspicion falls on Johnny 'Nebo', a local deaf mute, Scotland Yard sends its finest detective to investigate. What happens next will engulf the whole community.

Where do you draw writing inspiration from?

The particular landscapes and places I have lived in, mainly, as well as the people. My first published novel, *Unleaving*, is set in west Wales and Kwazulu Natal, South Africa where I lived for a time; other writings have an urban setting. I lived and worked in London for nearly 30 years so that experience, and my career as an English teacher in secondary education, has had an influence on my writing.

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

Seamus Heaney, Marilynne Robinson and Simon Schama. I would simply lob in a topic then sit back and enjoy the discussion!