

## About the Authors

### Anne Forrest

Anne Forrest lives in the Conwy Valley, North Wales. She gained a Masters at the University of Chester: 'Writing and Publishing Fiction' 2019-2020, after gaining a First Class Hons at Bangor Uni: MArts in 'English Literature with Creative Writing' in 2019. Her common-folk biography, *My Whole World, Penmaenmawr* was published by Old Bakehouse Publications, Abertillery, in 2000. *Lilies of the Valley*, a Gothic, family saga, made the strong longlist in the Cinnamon Press Debut Novel Award 2018, and her picaresque novel, *Quinn*, made the 'Mention with Honours' in 2020.

In partnership with co-writer, Judy Price, her collection of 'uncanny', short stories, *Cautiously Tiptoeing...Out of the Light*, was published in October 2020, and *Cautiously Tiptoeing...Into the Thirteen Days of Christmas*, in December.

Beautifully illustrated by Laura Stenhouse, *Timothy Crumble Explores Bodnant Garden* is her first children's book and is available as an Amazon paperback and ebook, and also in a full-colour edition paperback.

Visit her website at <https://anneforrestwriter.weebly.com>

FaceBook pages: *Anne Forrest Writer* and *Forrest & Price*

### Eleri Thomas

This is a story, spun purely from my imagination, about the place I spent my childhood, early adulthood and have since returned to. The place I call home. As a child, I was lucky enough to have the freedom to wander around this valley and its surrounding hills, unhindered and safe, alone or with friends. It was a time when everybody knew who everybody was. Nobody worried where I was, knowing I would be back when hungry. I found my way around the wide, often windy hills, which wrap themselves protectively around this valley and discovered peaceful places, pretty waterfalls, caves and secret hideaways. I knew the places where the less common animals and birds could be found. I discovered unusual flowers and plants and which, once home, tasked myself with identifying. This activity took place against the backdrop of the ever-changing seasons, which brought with them their own particular changes and curiosities.

Books fed my imagination, which saved me from the tedium of closed-in rainy days, when the mountains mysteriously disappeared into their thick shrouds of ever-moving mist. But once the sun came out, I was soon out and about again. My surroundings stimulated my imagination to overflowing and knew no boundaries. I scared myself with irrational thoughts of witches who lived in caves, and mad but kindly hermits who lived in remote, tumble-down mountain cottages. At school, I wrote these imaginings into stories and they were sometimes chosen to be read out in class. This encouraged me to think that maybe one day I might write a proper story. This story, although fictional, was always going to be set in the place in which I grew up and roamed,

because this is where I know.

Wandering the same valley and hills as an adult, I began to look at the place with grown-up eyes and started to imagine the people who may originally have inhabited this valley. I was inspired to imagine what their daily lives would have been like. I also wondered about the families who over the centuries had lived in my family home. Coincidentally, it was bought by my grandfather a hundred years ago in 1921, although my family had lived in the area for many years prior to this. The house probably dates back to the middle-ages, and I have spun my web of stories mainly around it. The one thing all the real and imagined families would have had in common, at whichever period in history, would be a deep abiding love for the valley, because that is what it engenders in all who are fortunate to inhabit it.

When the first inhabitants arrived, they began the transformative but necessary process by which they slowly changed the nature of the valley. From its former wooded state, it changed into land they could cultivate and on which to raise the livestock they had tamed. This process continued to shape the valley over many millennia. I imagined these first inhabitants had originated from southern Europe, carrying within them their need for a new, idealistic utopia, away from the restrictions, beliefs and structures of their former existence.

With these newly adult eyes, better knowledge and a continued love of the freedom of hill-walking, I began to see evidence of their existence, high up in remote places. The places they built their shelters, the areas they cleared to grow their corn, the pens they built using the smooth granite boulders which had been dragged down by an ancient glacier, to enclose their newly domesticated animals. I noticed the cairns they built to bury their dead and the upright stone circles where they worshipped their Gods. Those who know how to look, can see that the footprints of these former inhabitants resonate strongly down through the ages and can still be heard today. In my wanderings along the higher ground, I have also observed the pre-mating rituals of the descendants of the sturdy wild ponies that the ancients captured and tamed, and which today, still roam wild in the hills.

My stories are told through the prism of a modern-day inhabitant, drawn by the pull of the valley, in a desire to find his roots through ancestral links. With a specialist knowledge of pre-history, William strives to thread together and make sense of the lives of the first inhabitants and the occupants in the following centuries, their stories interwoven with his modern-day presence. Although devastated by personal events, he finally finds his own inner peace.

The valley is still loved and appreciated today as much as it was when first settled and as it has been throughout the ages. People move away, miss it and long to return through feeling the 'hiraeth', the nearest translation of which is a longing homesickness; it seems that when you leave, a piece of you stays behind. Others discover the valley and are motivated to move there to escape their relentless modern lifestyles in search of a slower pace, just as William's family does. Many more retire here from the industrial areas where they have made their fortunes, choosing to spend their later years in peace and tranquillity, surrounded by beauty.

What shines through all these ages is the deep love and commitment the valley

engenders in the people who have the good fortune to be born and live there. I hope you enjoyed my story and that I have done the valley justice.

## **Eira Moon**

Eira Moon was born and raised in North Wales.

Ever since she was young, Eira was always drawn to the creative arts; participating in many eisteddfodau, local community productions and writing songs in her spare time. With a passion for languages, travel, music and culture, she relocated and settled in Spain, embarking on many wonderful adventures and work experiences along the way.

Alongside her partner, she set up a successful events company, promoting and organizing entertainment to venues all over the world. Her next life-journey chapter brought her back to Wales to be closer to family, but she maintains her strong connection with her beloved Andalucia.

Eira and her partner are also proud and dedicated foster carers. They've cared for vulnerable children of all ages and backgrounds over the past several years- providing a safe and fun home for them to flourish and be happy. Her debut story, 'Greedy Gracee's Giant Chocolate Egg' was in fact inspired by a comical chat with one of their young foster children during the Covid 19 lockdowns!

The paperback, Kindle and Audiobooks are available in English, Welsh and Spanish. When not on the school run and role-playing superheroes, Eira enjoys long walks, travelling, watching rugby and photography.

<https://eiramoon.com>

## **Bethan Gwanas**

Awdur dros 40 o lyfrau poblogaidd i blant ac oedolion. Arbenigo mewn nofelau a straeon hawdd eu darllen, gydag elfen gref o hiwmor. Addasodd ei nofel gyntaf, **Amdani!** (am dîm rygbi merched) yn gyfres deledu. Enillodd wobwr Tir na n-Og am ei llyfrau i'r ardegau yn 2001 (**Llinyn Trôns**) a 2003 (**Sgôr**), a Gwobr Goffa T Llew Jones am nofel i blant 10-12 oed gyda **Gwylliaid**. Cyrhaeddodd restr fer Llyfr y Flwyddyn yn 2005 gyda **Hi yw Fy Ffrind**. Mae'n diwtor Cymraeg i oedolion a thrioleg **Blodwen Jones** ar gyfer dysgwyr yw ei gwerthwr gorau o bell ffordd.

Mae ei nofel newydd sbon ar gyfer oedolion newydd gael ei gyhoeddi: **Prawf Mot**, am gi arbennig iawn sy'n penderfynu bod raid i'r dynion yn mywyd ei berchennog, Lea, basio ei prawf o (prawf Mot... dallt rŵan?) cyn cael cyffwrdd ynddi. "Nofel ysgafn, obeithiol a chynnes am gariad, ffyddlondeb a heneiddio – drwy lygaid ci."

## **Karen Ankers**

Karen Ankers is a poet, playwright and novelist, and a Pushcart Prize nominee, who lives in Anglesey and is currently studying in Bangor for a PhD in Creative Writing. Her first novel, *The Crossing Place*, set in Chester where she grew up, was published in 2018 and has been described as 'gripping' and 'compelling'. She has had poems

published in various magazines and anthologies, including *Msllexia* and *Black Bough*, and published her first poetry collection, *One Word At A Time*, in 2017. Her short plays have been performed in the UK, USA, Australia and Malaysia, and her short film, *The Afterplanner*, directed by Ben Mole, won first prize in its category in the Great Lakes International Shorts Festival in 2018. She is a founder member of Cybi Poets and offers coaching and mentorship to writers through her business, Writeshaper. She is currently working on her second and third novels.