

ISLAND WRITING

Creative writing retreats inspired by place

Immersive residential writing experiences

Landscape · History · Nature · Myth · Memory · Imagination

Island Writing is a creative writing retreat designed around the particular character of an island.

Rather than bringing a generic writing course to an island, each retreat is developed in response to the place itself — its landscape, ecology, history, stories, people and sense of isolation or connection.

Participants are invited to slow down, pay attention and explore the island through writing, journalling, poetry, observation and imagination.

The programme is suitable for people at all levels – from beginners to published writers – and combines guided sessions with plenty of time for individual exploration and writing.

A successful pilot on Flat Holm

In summer 2024, I developed and facilitated the first Island Writing residential on Flat Holm, working with a group of ten participants over a weekend.

The programme drew on Flat Holm's:

- *natural environment and wildlife*
- *300-million-year-old geological history*
- *stories, myths and legends*
- *lighthouse and maritime history*
- *Victorian isolation hospital*
- *historical characters and visitors*
- *role in the development of wireless communication.*

Participants explored the island through sensory writing, mindful observation, journalling, poetry and haiku, writing from found objects, historical and imaginative writing, and the island as character and narrator.

“Thank you for facilitating our weekend of creative writing so gently, thoughtfully and expertly. It was my very first venture into a creative writing course of any type, and it certainly did not disappoint. I was amazed at the output I managed to achieve in such a short space of time - the beautiful setting of course helped hugely, giving space for my creative juices to flow, but being given prompts and space was key. Thank you.” – Jo (Participant on the 2026 Flat Holm retreat)



Shaped By Place

Possible elements of the retreat:

Arriving

Introductions, first impressions, sensory observation and journalling.

Exploring

Time to wander, notice, sketch and gather material.

Writing from nature

Exploration of birds, plants, geology, weather and the more-than-human world.

History & human stories

Writing from historical characters, buildings, objects and events.

Myth & imagination

Folklore, legends and new stories created from the island.

The island as character

Personification, voice, memory and perspective.

Poetry & form

Haiku, fragments, prose poetry and other ways of capturing a place.

Sharing

Optional reading, conversation and a collective response to the island.

Every island has its own story

Each retreat is developed specifically for its setting. The programme can respond to an island's particular ecology, heritage, literary connections, folklore and community, creating an experience that is both a creative writing course and a way of encountering the island itself.

Ways of working together

The Island Writing programme can be adapted to suit the needs and capacity of each island. There are several possible ways of working:

1. Island-led

The island organisation manages bookings, accommodation and participant fees, while I design and facilitate the creative writing programme for an agreed fee.

2. Partnership

We work together to develop and promote the retreat. The island provides accommodation, facilities and local knowledge, while I develop and deliver the programme. Income and costs are agreed between us.

3. Facilitator-led

I organise and promote the retreat, manage participant bookings and fees, and work with the island to arrange accommodation, access and other practical requirements. An agreed fee is paid to the island.

The Flat Holm creative writing retreat 2026 generated £2,500 in participant fees for a group of ten, providing income for the island alongside its cultural and educational programme.

Pricing and the division of costs/income can be discussed according to the island's accommodation, access and organisational arrangements.

I'm happy to discuss which model would work best for the island.

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About Me

I am a writer, poet and creative writing facilitator with an MA in Creative Writing. My writing practice centres on journalling, attention and the exploration of everyday experience, with a particular interest in how writing can support noticing, reflection and meaning-making.

Since 2015, I have facilitated creative writing sessions and residencies, including Creative Writing for Wellbeing programmes for Cardiff Council. Since 2024, I have also been facilitating creative writing retreats on Flat Holm Island, developing programmes that respond to the island's landscape, history, ecology and stories.

My approach is inclusive and exploratory, with an emphasis on curiosity and attention rather than producing polished pieces. Sessions combine prompts, sensory observation, free-writing, poetry, journalling and time for individual exploration and reflection.

Journalling is at the heart of my own writing practice: an accessible form of writing that creates space to notice what is happening, explore thoughts and feelings, record the everyday and discover connections that might otherwise be overlooked. I am particularly interested in the relationship between writing, wellbeing and attention.

My writing has appeared in *Lapidus Magazine*, *Wales Arts Review* and a range of literary magazines and journals. I have been longlisted for the V.S. Pritchett Short Story Prize and The White Review Short Story Prize.