

Blog post #1 Writer in Residence 2022 - Nicola Cassidy

Hello there,

If you're reading this, then you've found me as a writer-in-residence on the An Táin Arts Centre website. Perhaps you stumbled upon this post by accident, and if so, well, sorry about that, (please see BACK button above) but, if not, then perhaps you are a writer or artist yourself and nose-y about the arts and this residency. So let me tell you all about it!

To save time, here are my background deets:

Name: Nicola Cassidy

Writing to date: 4 novels, a few ghostbooks, 1 play and a couple of screenplays

From: Termonfeckin, Co. Louth

Success: Fair to middling

Ambitions: Total notions

Artist Residency: October, November, December 2022

What am I talking about saving time? Sure, I've all the time in the world. That's what these residencies are all about! So what do I spend my time doing?

Well, it takes a bit of organising to get myself here, as I'm not just a full-time writer but a work-from-home, school dropping Mammy. Once I've actually left the home life and childer behind, it's quite the excitement to head down to Dundalk and into the real world where there are live people and lunch serving cafes. Who knew?

On my drive down and back, which takes around 45 minutes, I like to get in a bit of audio listening as I don't believe you can be a good writer without being an avid reader and that's the second bonus I've found with my residency.

It wasn't until I started leaving the house regularly again that I realised how important it is to get out and about and meet people, not just for your mental health, but for inspiration for your writing.

Before becoming a full-time writer, I always worked outside the home and so I find myself energised and inspired by trotting around the place here and meeting people.

An Táin Arts Centre ask that as part of the residency you actually come into the space. I can see now why they do that. They realise creatives can be a little lonely and lost in their own worlds perhaps!

My days are short as I have to be back to do the school run, so I tend to make the most of things and work as hard as I can while I'm here. You'd think that might mean I'm spending all of my time lashing out the scripts, but really, so far, that's not what I've been doing.

Why? Well ... I'm not always ready to write. When I'm in the thick of writing a novel or a screenplay then it takes all my time and energy and I spend my writing hours doing that. But, I just published my fourth novel (*The Emerald Spy*) at the end of September. And so, my recent work has involved promotion and follow up.

For the past few days for example, I've been updating my website. I've also done some PR around media interviews, called into Dundalk Library, met with Tom at Roe River books, looked at setting up a few events for 2023 and spoke with two aspiring writers seeking advice.

Last Friday I had another launch for the book at An Grianán in Termonfeckin (where the book is set) and a second screening of a documentary I presented for Termonfeckin Development Board.

The week before that I was in Dublin to meet a film and TV producer, on the back of a Screen Ireland event that I completed a few weeks previously. I'm currently developing a reviewed outline of a TV drama based on that meeting.

I also ghostwrite and freelance for other writers to help them get their own books to publication, so while I work every single day, I'm not always writing my own novel or screenplay. Now that I've worked my way through most of the book promotional items, I intend for the remainder of my residency here, to fully concentrate as much as possible on developing something tangible.

Most likely the tangible thing will be the development of the TV drama series that I've interest in. I've already done quite a lot of work on it, but it's not quite there yet and so having time away from home and my usual environment is allowing me to think about it and, hopefully get the outline, and treatment completed. If I receive favourable feedback, I may get it to pilot stage.

Books wise, I do have another novel written but it needs to be restructured and I am in touch with my agent about that.

Most of the juggle I find as a full-time writer (apart from taking care of the home and family) is trying to support yourself with paid work while having enough time and creative energy to produce and rewrite your own body of work. That's why a residency like this is so important. It affords you time and also financial support. It gives you permission. To write, to think – to do what you want with the time you have been given. And to not feel guilty if I kick back and watch BBC iplayer for an hour during my lunch break. Because ... you know, research.

Nicola will be launching a writer mentoring programme as part of her residency in 2022. Look out for details coming soon.