



## AVRIL JOY WINS INAUGURAL COSTA SHORT STORY AWARD

**Wednesday 30th January 2013:** Former prison manager and now full-time writer, Avril Joy, from Witton-le-Wear in Bishop Auckland, has won the inaugural Costa Short Story Award. She beat five other writers, including bestselling author Salley Vickers, in a public vote where the identities of all six writers were unknown.

The announcement was made last night (Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> January) at the prestigious Costa Book of the Year ceremony in central London which saw Avril presented with a cheque for £3,500 by Costa Managing Director Christopher Rogers for her short story *Millie and Bird*.

Avril Joy said: "When I wrote my short story it felt special to me. I had no idea that it would resonate with so many readers. I am very grateful to everyone who has voted for me."

Two runners-up, writer Chioma Okereke and creative writing student Guy Le Jeune, each received £750.

Over 1800 entries were received for the new Costa Short Story Award, open to both published and unpublished writers, for a single, previously unpublished short story of up to 4,000 words by an author aged 18 years or over and written in English.

Established this year, the new Award - run in association with the Costa Book Awards but judged independently of the main five-category system – is unique in that it was judged anonymously ie without the name of the author being known throughout the process.

A shortlist of six stories was selected by a panel of judges - Richard Beard, Director of the National Academy of Writing; Fanny Blake, novelist, journalist and Books Editor of Woman & Home magazine; actor and writer Gary Kemp, songwriter and guitarist for Spandau Ballet; writer Victoria Hislop; and Simon Trewin, agent at William Morris Endeavor – and was then made available on the Costa Book Awards website for the public to download and vote for their favourite.

Avril's story, *Millie and Bird*, received the highest number of public votes followed by *Trompette de la Mort* by Chioma Okereke and *Small Town Removal* by Guy Le Jeune.

### **Avril Joy**

Avril Joy was born and brought up on the Somerset Levels, the setting for her first novel, *The Sweet Track*, published in 2007 by Flambard Press. In 2008 she gave up her job as a Senior Manager at HMP Low Newton women's prison on the outskirts of Durham City in order to write full-time. She writes novels, short stories and poetry and has recently completed a new venture into crime fiction, *Blood Tide*, a novel set in the heart of Newcastle. She posts regularly about life and writing on her blog which can be found at [www.avriljoy.com](http://www.avriljoy.com).

### ***Millie and Bird***

Two young girls find themselves caught in a world where love is unpredictable and attachment is dangerous.

Go to <http://www.costabookawards.com/short-stories/shortlist.aspx> to read and/or listen to Avril's winning story and the other five shortlisted ones.

The Costa Book Awards recognise the most enjoyable books of the last year by writers based in the UK and Ireland. Originally established by Whitbread PLC in 1971, Costa announced its takeover of the sponsorship of the UK's prestigious and popular book prize in 2006.

For more information on this year's Costa Book Awards, go to [www.costabookawards.com](http://www.costabookawards.com).

**-ENDS-**

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#### **Notes to Editors:**

##### **About the Costa Book Awards:**

- The Costa Book Awards, formerly the Whitbread Book Awards, were established in 1971 to encourage, promote and celebrate the best contemporary British writing.
- The total prize fund for the Costa Book Awards stands at £55,000. The award winners from the five categories - Novel, First Novel, Biography, Poetry and Children's Book - each receive £5,000.
- The overall Costa Book of the Year is selected from the five category Award winners with the winner receiving a further £30,000.
- Since the introduction of the Book of the Year award in 1985, it has been won ten times by a novel, four times by a first novel, five times by a biography, seven times by a collection of poetry and once by a children's book.
- The 2011 winner of the Costa Book of the Year was Andrew Miller for *Pure* (Sceptre).

**About Costa:****The UK's favourite coffee shop\***

Costa is the UK's favourite coffee shop, having been awarded "**Best Branded Coffee Shop Chain in the UK and Ireland**" by Allegra Strategies for three years running ( 2010 , 2011 & November 2012). **Winner of "Best Branded Coffee Chain in Europe"** Allegra Strategies 2011 and 2012.

Costa was founded by Italian brothers Sergio and Bruno Costa in 1971.

Costa is the nation's favourite coffee shop brand and has grown to become the sector leader within the UK and the second largest international coffee shop operator. At present the company has more than 2,300 stores across the UK, EMEI and Asia.

Just 1% of the world's production of coffee is good enough for us to choose from. Only the very best 100% RFA certified coffee available can go into creating the unique taste and aroma of our Mocha Italia blend.

Costa is committed to looking after our coffee-growers. That's why we've established The Costa Foundation, a registered charity. The Foundation's aims are to relieve poverty, advance education and the health and environment of coffee-growing communities around the world. So far, we have funded the building of 22 schools and improved the social and economic welfare of coffee-growing communities