

Novel idea proves talented Ruth has the write stuff for publishing success

Fergus Black

WHEN 15-year-old Ruth Gilligan started work on her transition year school project, little did she think it would turn into a best-selling novel.

'Forget' began life as a 50-page project but was soon transformed after Ruth purchased a 'how to write a novel' manual. The end result was to propel her into becoming the youngest-ever Irish author to top the mainstream fiction list.

Five years and two novels later, and with another book about to be published in August, the former 'Fair City' actress is now poised to pursue a masters in creative writing in a top American university.

It will add another string to her bow for Ruth (20), who scored eight AIs in her Leaving Cert, and who went to act on TV and in the theatre while also managing to pursue her love of writing – including a stint as a columnist with the *Irish Independent's* Weekend magazine.

Ruth is in the news again after becoming the youngest Irish graduate to be made an O'Reilly scholar under the O'Reilly Foundation Scholarship Programme.

She joins fellow recipient Inish O'Doherty (24), also from Dublin, who is currently doing his PhD in chemical biology in Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.

Both have received awards worth €25,400 per annum

under the scholarship programme to pursue their studies.

Later this year, Ruth will complete her BA in English literature in Cambridge University before embarking on her masters in creative writing in the US.

Natural

She has picked Columbia University as her first choice, followed by NYU, and will find out in April if she has been accepted.

"I think I've proven I've a natural talent for writing but that doesn't mean I should rest on my laurels," she said.

Her fellow O'Reilly scholar, Inish, who graduated from UCD with a first class honours in chemistry, is a year and a

half into his five-year PhD in chemical biology in Cornell University.

He was already in the renowned US university when word came that he had been awarded one of the prestigious scholarships.

"It was phenomenal. The scholarship really secures my place regardless of the economic changes that may come," he said.

The O'Reilly Foundation was set up as a charitable foundation by Sir Anthony O'Reilly in 1998. It sponsors a programme of scholarships for young Irish scholars to undertake post-graduate education in their chosen field and in an institution or university of their choice worldwide.



Ruth Gilligan: the youngest ever graduate to be made an O'Reilly scholar