

crimefest090508ML-001

Organisers Myles Allfrey, left, and Adrian Muller

# Partners in crime

**W**hodunnit? Well, that's easy enough to solve. The answer is Adrian Muller and Myles Allfrey.

However, it is not quite so simple to deduce their motive for organising CrimeFest, a new international convention on crime fiction that will take place in Bristol next month.

Why go to all the trouble of gathering some of the world's top crime novelists and their readers at the Marriott Royal Hotel, and arranging events including a crime-writing workshop, and a gala dinner with an awards ceremony?

Adrian, 43, a member of the Crime Writers' Association, admits: "We certainly didn't set out with the intention of organising our own crime fiction convention in Bristol."

"It all just evolved after we held the American Left Coast Crime convention here in 2006. It was an event that had traditionally been held in America, but one year a venue hadn't been arranged and we suggested holding it here in Bristol."

Adrian, who lives in Clifton, and Myles, who lives in Tunbridge Wells, ended up organising a gathering attended by about 500 people at the Marriott.

"We thought that was the end of it but so many people kept asking when we'd be holding another crime fiction event," says Adrian, a freelance writer specialising in crime fiction.

"We couldn't do Left Coast Crime again as it's an ongoing American event, so we started looking at organising a new one based upon it."

"Bristol is the perfect location because it has an international airport, so people can come over from the States, but the hotels aren't as expensive as in London. We've been able to provide all sorts of activities for days out as there's so much to do around here."

CrimeFest, which is sponsored by Blackwells, and the publishers Orion and Penguin, will be held at the Marriott between June 5 and 8. The aim is to turn CrimeFest into an annual event.

Among the 250 delegates attending from Britain, America and Europe will be leading crime writers Ian Rankin,

A new international crime fiction convention is to be staged in Bristol. **Suzanne Savill** finds out more about CrimeFest

Karin Fossum, Jeff Lindsay and Ruth Dudley Edwards.

"The Marriott Royal is a brilliant hotel which is right in the middle of the city, and they've been very welcoming to us — we wouldn't think about organising CrimeFest anywhere else," says Adrian.

There will be a champagne reception at the hotel, and it will also be the venue for the CrimeFest Gala Dinner, at which the winners of CrimeFest's two awards will be announced.

The awards are the revived Last Laugh Award for Best Humorous Crime Novel, and the new Sounds Of Crime Award, sponsored by Audible UK, for best crime audiobook.

Delegates will also be able to go on a variety of trips, including outings to the Cotswolds and Glastonbury Abbey, and a tour of Bristol.

"It's a very social occasion," says Adrian. "For people who are fans of crime fiction it's a great opportunity to meet authors, and to ask writers such as Ian Rankin why he set his Inspector Rebus novels in Edinburgh instead of Glasgow."

"A lot of people also come to events like these to discover new writers, and Blackwells will be bringing over books from crime authors who will be attending but are not in print in the UK."

CrimeFest will also be hosting a crime writers' workshop, and everyone who takes part will be automatically registered for the Crime Writers' Association debut dagger award.

"It's the best way for a new crime writer to get published," says Adrian.

"Every author who has won the debut dagger award has gone on to get a publisher."

Adrian has been involved in crime fiction as a freelance writer since 1993, after previously taking a BA in arts administration and then working at Bristol's Watershed in various roles, including as a projectionist.

"When I was at school we had to do book reports. I did one on The Hound Of The Baskervilles, and after that I was hooked on crime fiction," says Adrian, who was born in Canada, brought up in the Netherlands but spent a lot of his childhood in Bristol, where his grandfather, Con Stevens, was a director of Bristol Rovers.

He adds: "My own favourite crime authors are Meg Gardner, Laurie R King, Val McDermid and Ian Rankin."

Adrian's passion for crime fiction has led to him interviewing leading crime writers including James Elroy, Patricia Cornwell and Val McDermid, as a freelance journalist.

It also resulted in him meeting his American-born wife, Jennifer Muller, who worked for leading US crime fiction publisher Poison Pen Press.

She moved to Bristol, where she now works as UK managing director of Poisoned Pen Press, and the couple have a 15-month-old daughter.

**The full registration fee for CrimeFest is £125, and includes attendance to all panels. Day tickets – priced at £60 – will be available for Friday, June 6, and Saturday, June 7. Tickets for the CrimeFest Gala Dinner on Saturday, June 7, are £30. All delegates will receive a free canvas bag with a programme and a selection of free crime books, including an audio book. For further information call 0117 914 9639 or go to [www.crimefest.com](http://www.crimefest.com)**

