

Have a say on policing

YOUNGSTERS are being given the opportunity to have their say about the police with the force's first online youth survey.

Inspector Paul Cox said: "This survey is a chance for the young people of Avon and Somerset to log on and tell us what they think about the police, what we do well and where they think we need to improve."

"The survey will give 13 to 19 year olds from across the force area the opportunity to make a positive difference to how we do things in the future."

The survey includes 20 questions which look at policing issues.

All entrants who provide their email address will also be automatically entered into a prize draw to win a Wii or one of two iPod Shuffles. Everyone who participates and gives the police their email address will also get a copy of a report of the results of the survey.

The survey will run from May 9 to June 29 and is open to all 13 to 19 year olds living in Avon and Somerset. To complete the survey log on at www.consultation.avonandsomerset.police.uk/police/20questions.

Show off your dog at fun show

AS part of National Pet Week, dog owners and their beloved hounds will be able to take part in a fun dog show in Bradley Stoke this weekend.

As well as Best in Show and Reserve Best in Show, there will be 14 categories for dogs and owners to enter, including Best Puppy, Best Veteran, Most Handsome Dog, and Prettiest Bitch.

Cups will be presented to the winners of Best in Show and Reserve as well as for Best Puppy and Best Greyhound or Lurcher.

The show will be held at the Willow Brook Centre in Bradley Stoke town square on Sunday, May 8, from 11.30am to 3.30pm.

All proceeds from the day will be donated to Bristol Dog Action Welfare Group and Greyhound and Lurcher Rescue. For information, call Geraldine on 0117 9695332.

CRIMINAL ENTERPRISE

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With Bristol CrimeFest about to return to the city for its fourth year, DAVID CLENSY meets the man behind the annual literary convention

Literary festival with a difference: Adrian Muller, co-host of Bristol's CrimeFest

Photograph: Barbara Evripidou

A SHADOW looms around the corner. My step quickens. But it's too late. The man lunges at me, his eyes fixed on mine in a steely glare.

Luckily Adrian Muller is only handing me a copy of his newly printed poster for this month's Bristol CrimeFest.

The annual celebration of crime writing, now in its fourth year, has become an increasingly important point on the hectic calendar of UK literature festivals.

It may not have the scale and grandeur of Cheltenham or Hay-on-Wye, but it's the small scale

friendliness and genre specialism of CrimeFest that means it would be, well, a crime to miss it.

"It's different from any of the better known literary festivals," Adrian says.

"It's much more like an American-style convention for writers, publishers and readers of crime fiction."

"At somewhere like Cheltenham, it's the norm for the big writers to come in, give a talk, sign a few books, then get swept away in their publisher's car."

"But CrimeFest is very different. Most of the delegates, including all the main writers being featured, stay with us at the Bristol Marriott Royal Hotel for the whole weekend."

The festival, which runs from May 19 to 22, this year features the likes of thriller writer Peter James and former head of MI5 Stella Rimington.

"Fans are likely to be able to go and enjoy a chat over a drink with their favourite writers in the hotel bar, as well as sitting in the audience watching them be interviewed on stage, take part in a debate or give a reading from their new book," Adrian says.

The 46-year-old festival organiser, from Clifton, has a true passion for crime literature.

He left behind his job as a projectionist at the Watershed in the early 1990s after bagging an interview with crime writer James Ellroy - the interview kick-started an esoteric career in freelance journalism, specialising almost exclusively in interviewing crime novelists.

"I couldn't believe my luck when James Ellroy agreed to be interviewed by me," Adrian says. "His publisher sent a copy of his new book to read before the interview, and I was paid by a

national newspaper for the piece. So I thought, this is brilliant - getting paid to talk to writers I really admire. I should try to do it for a living."

It was a career move that led to Adrian interviewing everyone on the crime fiction scene from Patricia Cornwell to Val McDermid.

It also led to Adrian meeting his American wife, crime fiction publisher Jennifer Muller, who works for leading US crime fiction publisher Poison Pen Press.

But crime fiction has been his passion since childhood.

"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 for life," 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.

But it was a period spent in Berkeley, in the United States, in 2005 that shifted Adrian's career towards festival organising.

"I was over there interviewing crime writers, but I met and got to know the people behind the Left Coast Crime festival, which is a very popular annual convention in the States."

"They take the convention to a different place on the west coast of the US each year, and they couldn't think of somewhere new to take it for 2006. So I suggested Bristol. They said, 'but that's in Britain', and I said, yes, but it's on the left coast of Britain."

"To my surprise they went with the idea, so I got involved in the organisation of bringing it to Bristol for a year."

Adrian joined forces with his fellow festival organiser, Myles Allfrey, a Tunbridge Wells-based

podiatrist, and fellow member of the Crime Writers' Association.

He and Adrian had met through acquaintances at the now-defunct London specialist bookshop, Crime In Store, a few years earlier.

"After our success organising the Left Coast Crime visit to Bristol, publishers, readers and writers all came back to us wanting to do something again the following year in the city. So we created Bristol CrimeFest."

"We ran our first CrimeFest in 2008, and it's been getting bigger ever since. We're already planning next year's festival, but after that we may have to move the festival to London, in order to increase further the support we're getting from publishers."

For now at least, CrimeFest is a distinctly Bristolian institution, though Adrian says the 300-400 delegates will come from all corners of the globe.

"People with a real passion for crime fiction will travel around the world for this kind of event," he says.

"This year we have some top-name writers, such as Peter James, Deon Meyer, Diamond Dagger award winner Lindsey Davis, and former head of MI5 Stella Rimington, who will be interviewing the writer behind last year's hit book *MI6*, Professor Keith Jeffery."

"We will also have our gala dinner, champagne reception, awards ceremony, opportunity for aspiring writers to meet literary agents, as well as a full range of talks and debates running throughout the weekend."

Bristol CrimeFest will be held at the Bristol Marriott Royal Hotel, College Green, from May 19 to 22. Full weekend tickets cost £140. To book, visit the website at www.crimefest.co.uk.

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Featured authors: thriller writer Peter James and former head of MI5 Stella Rimington