

Crimefest boss solves the tricky case of Sherlock Holmes

David Clensy talks to Adrian Muller, organiser of Bristol's Crimefest, about how he secured a Sherlock coup for this year's festival



● Benedict Cumberbatch as Sherlock in the hit BBC TV series



● Above, renowned author Robert Goddard; above right, the bright new star of the crime fiction world, Denise Mina; right, the godfather of Scottish crime-writing William McIlvanney

WHEN it comes to enduring crime fiction, nobody has ever quite taken the crown from Arthur Conan Doyle – as the success of the recent television series has reminded us, Sherlock Holmes is a man for all ages.

Which is why Adrian Muller, the man behind Bristol's annual crime literature festival, Crimefest, has spent much of the last three years trying to nail down the ultimate crime thriller fan's night of entertainment for this year's festival – with a "meet the creators" of the BBC's *Sherlock* series.

"It's a real coup for us," says Adrian, whose genre-specific literature festival is now in its sixth year. "We managed to get Mark Gatiss, from *The League of Gentlemen*, who is also an accomplished crime writer – he was the man who originally came up with the idea of recreating Sherlock in the 21st century."

He will be talking at the special event on June 1 alongside the man responsible for the *Sherlock* screenplay, Steven Moffat – also known as one of the lead writers on *Doctor Who*.

"He always brought an element of crime fiction to his *Doctor Who* episodes," Adrian says. "He's a real crime fiction fan, and I think delegates will enjoy listening to him talk."

They will be joined on the night by Sue Vertue, series producer for *Sherlock*.

But it's not the only highlight at this year's festival for crime fiction aficionados – the headline guest is Robert Goddard.

"It's wonderful to have such a towering figure from the world of crime fiction coming to Bristol for this year's Crimefest," Adrian says.



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Adrian Muller

"He is one of the world's most popular crime novelists, and is loved the world over as the master of the twist."

Among the other highlights this year are the godfather of Scottish crime-writing William McIlvanney and the bright new star of the crime fiction world, Denise Mina.

The intimate festival, which is held at the Bristol Marriott Royal Hotel, attracts a select group of around 400 "delegates" – a fraction of the crowds seen at literature festivals like Hay on Wye or Cheltenham.

"That's a big part of the charm of the festival," Adrian says. "The delegates all stay in the same hotel as the authors, between talks they are relaxing in the bar together, at meal times they are rubbing shoulders with their literary heroes in the restaurant – there's a lovely informality to the whole thing."

The 48-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 a career in freelance journalism, specialising almost exclusively in interviewing crime novelists.

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

He was over there interviewing crime writers, but met and got to know the people behind the Left Coast Crime festival – a 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 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. Last year we sold out the festival entirely for the first time, and this year tickets are already selling rapidly."

● Crimefest will be held at the Bristol Marriott Royal Hotel, from May 30 to June 2. For ticket details, visit the website at www.crimefest.com.



“ It's a real coup for us

Adrian Muller

Stephen Moffat, left, and Mark Gatiss, right

