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## **Crime writing festival explores the facts behind the fiction**

Northumbria University, Newcastle and New Writing North are launching a brand new festival for writers and lovers of crime fiction.

Crime Story, which takes place at Northumbria University on 31 May and 1 June, is a weekend of panel discussions and workshops focusing on a fictional crime as it weaves its way through the criminal justice system.

Details of the festival were revealed at Northumbria University's Gallery North on 13 February during the launch party of Ann Cleeves' new Vera

Stanhope novel, Harbour Street.

Ann, a prize-winning author whose Vera Stanhope books are now a major ITV series, has been commissioned to write the crime scenario on which the festival will be based. Experts, including academics from Northumbria University, will walk participants through the different stages of the criminal justice system – from investigation through to sentencing.

The scenario will be based around a young man, found dead in a locked room; a grieving foster mother; a landlord who keeps himself to himself and the picture of an enigmatic girl smiling down from the bloody wall.

With the scenario set out, Crime Story participants will be given an in-depth look at how the investigation and trial would proceed. Northumbria experts and invited guests including police chiefs, top forensics specialists and criminologists, will demonstrate how the police would investigate the crime, what forensics could uncover and how it would be handled in the courts.

Crime writers will also share their expertise at the festival, including Anne Cleeves herself who will be in conversation with Gaby Chiappe – the screenwriter behind the TV adaptations of the Vera novels. Award-winning crime writer Louise Welsh will also be at Crime Story to talk about her latest novel *A Lovely Way to Burn*.

Optional workshops on other elements of the criminal process will also be available, such as further forensic analysis, the impact of the media on investigating crime and digital forensics. Guardian columnist and writer Erwin James and Northumbria Senior Lecturer, Dr Louise Ridley will be talking about *The Prison Experience*, while Judge Prince of Durham will be discussing what happens once a crime gets to court in the Trial and Judgement session and Margaret Murphy (who writes under the pseudonym of AD Garrett) will be running a creative writing workshop.

The day will be led by chairperson, Peter Guttridge, author and former crime fiction critic for *The Observer*, who will also be on hand to answer questions. Anna Disley, Acting Chief Executive of New Writing North, said: “Crime Story brings the expertise that exists within Northumbria University, together with literature audiences to create a unique event. It’s one of many projects to come out of Northumbria University’s pioneering partnership with New Writing North, which develops, supports and celebrates writers at all stages

of their career.”

Lucy Winskell, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Business and Engagement at Northumbria University said: “Collaborative working is at the heart of everything that we do here at Northumbria. By working in partnership with New Writing North, we are able to share cultural opportunities with our students and staff, and create opportunities for the wider community to tap into the academic expertise we nurture within the University.

“It is through this expertise that we are also able to engage in the current debate around the criminal justice system, building on the contributions our academics made recently to Lord Stevens’ Independent Police Commission review.

“A festival such as this has the potential to attract visitors from far and wide, and we hope to see Crime Story develop further and cement itself as a regular highlight in the national literary calendar.”

Crime Story is an unmissable opportunity for any lover of crime fiction, whether they write it, aspire to write it, or just want to peek behind the covers of their favourite, fictional world.

The first five people to buy tickets to Crime Story will also win signed copies of Harbour Street, courtesy of Cleeves’ publishers, Macmillan.

Crime Story will take place on Northumbria University’s campus in the heart of Newcastle upon Tyne, on Saturday 31st May and Sunday 1st June, 2014. For further details, visit [www.crimestory.co.uk](http://www.crimestory.co.uk)

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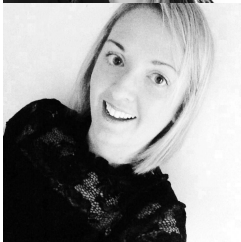
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