

# Leigh at Harrogate

by Sonia Kilvington

Continuing our series of interviews at the Harrogate Crime Writing Festival, we catch up with InTouch favourite, Leigh Russell and discuss her experience of the event.



## When did you arrive at the crime festival?

I arrived on Thursday and I am staying here for the whole event because it's such a fantastic weekend at Harrogate, I didn't want to miss a minute of it. It really is an extraordinary weekend because people are so friendly, and the hotel is packed with writers and readers who are really passionate about books, you can walk through the lounge and everyone there is reading books. Then of course you have people like Val McDermid and Mark Billingham; so friendly, always ready to chat to everybody. It's a really lovely atmosphere here.

## Are you hosting a table at the author's dinner tonight?

I am hosting a table tonight, I am not quite sure what that involves but I have been told that I just have to eat and talk to people and I thought well I can do that, and if can't do that, I will just have to drink as well. I am looking forward to it; everybody says it's a relaxed, fun event.

## Do you intend to watch any of the panels?

I have been to quite a few of the panels. It's always interesting to hear other authors speaking and at Harrogate you get the authors who are at the top on their game. So I have heard Martina Cole, Tess Gerritsen, Sophie Hannah and I looking forward to hearing Frances Fyfield because she is a particular favourite of mine. Just so many, Linwood Barclay, Lisa Gardner, I heard last night; a lot of things that they said resonate, it's just so interesting, it's a really entertaining and informative festival.

## Can you tell me about your new book?

My new book is called Dead End. My detective, Geraldine Steel is now number one bestselling female detective on Amazon kindle, which is quite exciting. I have delivered the next book which is coming out next year, I am not telling anyone the title, yet; you will have to wait and see, but in that book Geraldine relocates, because up until now she has been based in Kent. In the book coming out next year, which is now with my publisher, Geraldine has moved to London and so she is going to be in the Metropolitan Police Force,

which shakes things up a bit; because I don't want to get too formulaic, but at the same time, it is still Geraldine and it gives her a different location, and I do actually deal with location in the fourth book. It gives the book a little more depth and also, of course, she has a new team around her. In the fifth book, which I am writing at the moment, her mentor from Cut Short, D.I. Carter; he comes back in briefly and Kathryn Gordon, so that the characters that have already been established have not been abandoned completely, but Geraldine has moved on. She just keeps in touch with them. But again, the main thrust of the book is the murder investigation.

## Have you signed up for any more books at your publishers?

Initially I was signed up for three books with my publisher, and they have proved so popular they have signed me up for another three, the one for the next year is delivered, I am writing the one after that, and there will be another one after that, and then I hoping the books will continue to sell well and we will just carry on. I have twenty books in mind. I have the last scene of book twenty in my head. Not quite sure how we are going to get there, I think that Geraldine will have a few problems and ups and downs in her personal life before we get to the end of the series, but her life is very much in the background of the book. I am surprised by the following she seems to have. I get lots of emails asking when she is she going to get herself sorted out and find a decent bloke; but that's very much in the background; it's the murder stories which are the main interest of the book.

## In Dead End I was interested in Geraldine's search for her mother, will that continue into the next book?

That is going to continue for a while, in the book coming out next year that is a little bit in the background and she is busy with her move to London and getting herself established in another police station, with a new team around her, but it is still there in the background and so there will be more about that in the following book. Eventually I think that story line will have to find a resolution, but not for a while.

### Are you doing a lot of research on London for the next book?

I live near London and one of my daughters lives in central London so it is easy to get there and I have been travelling around a bit. I had a scene in mind where a body could be deposited, I researched it on the internet, and I found somewhere and I looked at the aerial photography, so I had seen the place on line, then I went there and it was so exciting because it the real place was exactly how it looked on the screen. I was meeting one of my daughters afterwards for a drink in a busy in a pub and I rushed in excitedly and said, 'I have found a fantastic place to dump a dead body,' and my daughter said, 'Keep your voice down mum!'

### Are you still working as a teacher?

I am still doing some teaching, I am actually teaching a unit of crime fiction at sixth form, next year, which should be fun, we will be looking at Willkie Collins, we will go through Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes, who is really as much a precursor of superman as he is a precursor of Poirot and Rebus, and then we are moving on to an Ian Rankin, The Complaints; the role of the police force has changed very much by the time we get up to current times.

### Are you teaching any creative writing courses?

I run creative writing courses for The Society of Authors, that's for members only; I also do writing workshops at "Get Writing," for the University of Hertfordshire. I have couple of courses lined up; I am doing one in France at the end October, which I am really looking forward to; it sounds like a wonderful place. They have a chef there and there are local wines. We will basically be writing in the morning and then the afternoons are free; I will do some one to one sessions in the afternoons, and in the evening we will all sit around a table, eating and drinking and talking about writing. The place is called Mas Saurine. It's open to anybody from successfully published authors down to people who have just started writing. Writing is a great lever; you can have someone who is an award winning author and some who is just starting out, and everyone's writing. You never know what is going to happen; anyone who is writing now could be published successfully, this time next year. Things can happen really quickly; if you had said to me five years ago, I could be a successfully published author and have two bestselling novels and be topping Amazon kindle list, I would have said, I don't know what you are talking about, I don't even write...



Dead End by Leigh Russell is available

at Amazon in paperback and Kindle formats.

For more information on Leigh Russell visit her new website [www.leighrussell.co.uk](http://www.leighrussell.co.uk)

For information on the creative writing course in France [www.writingfrance.com](http://www.writingfrance.com)

If you have any questions on the Harrogate Crime Writing

Festival please send them to [www.harrogate-festival.org.uk/yourebooked/2011/09/ask-us-a-question/](http://www.harrogate-festival.org.uk/yourebooked/2011/09/ask-us-a-question/)

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Sonia & Leigh Russell



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Leigh Russell