

## Annual report for Gŵyl CRIME CYMRU Festival 2022

Registration number 1196078

Gŵyl CRIME CYMRU Festival's aims are to:

1. Establish a world-class, international crime fiction festival for Wales
2. Benefit and work with the population of Aberystwyth, home of the festival, and the surrounding area
3. Further the three founding aims of the Crime Cymru collective: to support writers in and of Wales, to develop new Welsh crime writing talent, to promote Welsh artistic life in & outside Wales.
4. Gŵyl CRIME CYMRU Festival aims to be inclusive, collaborative, authentic and sustainable.

Gŵyl CRIME CYMRU Festival runs on a biennial pattern – in odd years a physical festival in Aberystwyth, the festival's chosen home, and in even years, an online festival which aims to widen the reach of our festival and promote Welsh crime writing and Welsh culture to the four corners of the world via Youtube streaming.

### 2022's festival

Crime Cymru had planned to run the first physical **Gŵyl CRIME CYMRU Festival** in Aberystwyth in April 2022. However, at the stage when the steering group had to make key decisions Covid restrictions made the festival unviable. The very difficult decision was taken, therefore, that we would run 2022's **Gŵyl CRIME CYMRU Festival** online and defer our first physical festival to 2023.

There were advantages to this decision. The resounding success of 2021's festival and the vastly increased profile for Crime Cymru meant that almost every author invited accepted our invitation to appear, resulting in a programme that was very much admired both by audience members and in the publishing industry. Once again, we were able to offer our audiences international bestsellers and prize winners, along with a true crime offering and, of course, Welsh language events which included both TV drama and crime fiction.

Despite both a marked degree of 'Zoom fatigue' which has been noted by festival organisers nationwide, and the gradual re-emergence of 'in person' festivals to this year, the audiences for the twelve **Gŵyl CRIME CYMRU Festival** events held this year were, encouragingly, slightly larger than those who watched live last year.

Tickets were offered via Ticketsource and, over the whole festival 2268 people watched live. Taken together, the two Welsh language events did not attract more than 60 live viewers so the mean audience figure for the remaining ten events averaged over 200 live views which is very high for online festivals. 42% of registrants surveyed indicated that they would be 'very likely' to attend the physical festival in Aberystwyth next year, which was very encouraging.

Ticket bookings were international: 71 % from the UK, 20% from North America, 6% from Europe including Ireland, and 3% from the rest of the world. Between 60 and 90% of registrants for any given event watched live and, to date, festival events have been viewed on more than 2,500 occasions on the **Gŵyl CRIME CYMRU Festival** YouTube channel.

Speaker feedback on **Gŵyl CRIME CYMRU Festival '22** was universally positive with all authors who responded to our feedback questionnaire saying that they would be extremely likely to recommend our festival to other potential speakers.

Feedback from our audience has also been very positive across all aspects of the festival, with almost 83% of respondents to an audience survey rating the festival as either very good or excellent.

## Overview of changes from last year's pattern

### 1. PROGRAMMING:

**Gŵyl CRIME CYMRU Festival Online '21** offered its audience 18 events over an 8 day period. This resulted in a considerable strain on those members of the festival steering group overseeing the production of the festival, particularly the co-chairs who were present at every event to welcome participating speakers in the online green room and to chat with them after the event. Viewing figures and audience feedback also suggested that weekend events – particularly those taking place between 10am and 5pm – were far less popular than weeknight events. The decision was taken, therefore, to offer twelve events over six nights, separated by the bank holiday weekend. Six events were run, two per evening, from the 27<sup>th</sup> to the 29<sup>th</sup> of April, and another six on the same pattern from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 4<sup>th</sup> of May. On this occasion, no drop-off in audience figures was noted.

Learning from our experience in 2021, the number of authors participating in each festival event was reduced from an average of four to an average of two plus a moderator. This resulted in greater satisfaction for participators who were able to take part in more in-depth discussions, and also for audiences who enjoyed a greater degree of insight into each individual author's work and process.

As **Gŵyl CRIME CYMRU Festival Online '21** had been conceived as a free festival, in order to achieve this, chairing of panels was largely undertaken by Crime Cymru members. However, this led to some inconsistency in standard which the steering group wished to avoid this year. With the grant secured from Literature Wales, it was possible to invite professional chairs to oversee the majority of events, with the most successful Crime Cymru chairs (who have, since **Gŵyl CRIME CYMRU Festival Online '21** gone on to chair other events at both festivals and bookshop/launch events) continuing to chair a minority

of panels. Feedback on all chairs at **Gŵyl CRIME CYMRU Festival '22** was unanimously rated as 'excellent'.

In line with **Gŵyl CRIME CYMRU Festival's** stated aim of introducing Welsh crime writers to a worldwide audience, as many members of Welsh crime writers' collective, Crime Cymru, as possible were included on the programme. With the exception of our international spotlight event featuring Ann Cleeves and Lilja Sigurdardottir, and one of the Welsh language events, each of the remaining ten events featured a rising star from Crime Cymru comprising bestsellers, prize nominees and those who have successfully made the transition from self-publishing to being commercially published. However, in a bid to introduce a significantly greater number of Crime Cymru authors this year, a new feature was added to the programme, adopting a model used very successfully by Scotland's premier crime fiction festival, Bloody Scotland. At the beginning of each event, an emerging or less-well-known author was offered a five-minute slot to introduce themselves and read from their work. These authors included the two inaugural winners of the **Gwobr Nofel Cyntaf CRIME CYMRU First Novel Prize**. This feature proved enormously popular with audiences, though it did throw up some issues around performance which will need to be addressed at next year's festival.

## 2. FUNDING

The decision was taken, in line with Crime Cymru's commitment to adhering to the Society of Authors' guidelines, to offer a fee to all our participating authors. This was met through a combination of sources. A grant was secured from Literature Wales's *Inspiring Communities* fund. Aberystwyth Town Council, who had already granted £5000 for what should have been a physical festival in Aberystwyth, kindly agreed that we might use a proportion of this to run our online festival, on the condition that we did not, subsequently, take the decision to run the physical festival elsewhere. This was a commitment the steering group was very happy to make. Using a different ticketing platform also meant that it was possible to offer registrants the opportunity to make a donation and more than £1000 was raised by this method, matching and slightly exceeding the grant made to the festival by Literature Wales which enabled us to cover our authors' fees.

## 3. MARKETING

Learning from last year's social media coverage, this year the festival steering group focussed social media slightly differently. With the help of a professional marketing consultant in the Crime Cymru ranks, a newsletter was established and refined, a formal marketing strategy established, and consistent branding adopted. Twitter was identified as the most successful platform in attracting viewers for **Gŵyl CRIME CYMRU Festival '21**; therefore, with limited resources in terms of time and personnel, this was established as

our key platform, with a backup on Facebook. These platforms are in addition to the festival website where information is always available.

Author satisfaction in terms of social media marketing of both the whole festival and their own individual events was very high, with the vast majority rating social media coverage 'excellent'.

More than 1000 people are now registered for the festival newsletter and a significantly greater number for our Twitter account. When the Twitter accounts of the various Crime Cymru authors are added to this, **Gŵyl CRIME CYMRU Festival**'s social media reach exceeds 30 000 followers.

The **Gŵyl CRIME CYMRU Festival** YouTube channel continues to attract visitors and expand our potential audience. The inclusion of a new promotional video, aided by the generosity of Visit Ceredigion in allowing us to use their promotional footage, will allow people not only to see the standard of events that they would experience in coming to **Gŵyl CRIME CYMRU Festival '23** in Aberystwyth next year, but to see some of the attractions of both Ceredigion and Aberystwyth itself.

#### 4. PRODUCTION

As was the case last year, this year's festival was run via Zoom and streamed, live, on the **Gŵyl CRIME CYMRU Festival** YouTube channel. This model allows us to run an 'online green room' where participants can be greeted, any technical issues dealt with and any remaining procedural details or authors' requests confirmed. The system also allows for a debrief and brief celebratory conversation after the event. This model – which is not universal, even in the larger festivals - has proved very popular amongst participating authors who feel that some of the camaraderie of a physical event – very important in the close-knit crime fiction writing community – is maintained and who feel valued and welcomed by **Gŵyl CRIME CYMRU Festival**.

In 2021, Aberystwyth media company Haka Entertainment acted as producers for **Gŵyl CRIME CYMRU Festival**. However, in 2022 the company did not have the capacity to take on the work and so the production contract went out to tender. Two local firms were contacted but decided not to tender and a producer was recruited via HandHeld Events Ltd who have acted as unpaid consultants/mentors to **Gŵyl CRIME CYMRU Festival '22**. This producer, Jamie Lamb, was extremely competitive in terms of pricing and was, subsequently, very highly rated by all participants. Mr Lamb proved extremely flexible and responsive to our needs and the **Gŵyl CRIME CYMRU Festival** steering group would be keen to work with him on filming and streaming for our live festival next year in Aberystwyth.

## 5. PARTNER BOOKSHOPS

Last year's **Gŵyl CRIME CYMRU Festival** experimented with a partnership scheme with Welsh independent bookshops whereby, in exchange for using their own social media platforms to advertise events, specific bookshops would be recommended at each panel event. This was discontinued this year as, despite a great deal of effort on the part of those steering group members dealing with this scheme, the bookshops did not see an uptick in sales relating to their nominated panels. It seems that for those who are sufficiently tech-savvy to access festivals online, the lure of clicking straight through to Amazon remains too great.

### Looking forward:

#### 1. FESTIVAL STEERING GROUP

In beginning to plan next year's festival in Aberystwyth, it was recognised that to fulfill our ambition to run a festival 'not just in Aberystwyth but with Aberystwyth' the steering group would need to recruit people from the local area. To this end, three new members have been invited to the steering group, which currently numbers six, representing an increase of 50% in our numbers. One invitee – a retired academic who is a native Welsh speaker – has accepted and is already proving invaluable. With the two other invitees drawn from the business community, we hope to have residents of Aberystwyth and the surrounding area represented as much as possible at all decision-making levels.

#### 2. FESTIVAL DATES

The early May bank holiday was initially chosen as the appropriate weekend to hold **Gŵyl CRIME CYMRU Festival** as it did not clash with any other local festivals and was just before the main crime fiction festival season begins in mid-May with Bristol's Crimefest.

However, circumstances change quickly with fashion and, having undertaken additional research during the last year, it has become clear that though the early May bank holiday has many attractions, it may not be the best weekend to hold a festival as a) it is a popular wedding weekend, tying up much hotel accommodation and b) it has become the 'go to' weekend for those organising Aberystwyth University reunions. Given the limits on hotel accommodation and the desire of many crime writers to be with their colleagues in one central venue, the decision was taken to look for a more appropriate weekend.

In consultation with Aberystwyth residents and with the Ceredigion Museum, which remains the steering group's preferred venue, we have nominated the weekend of the 21st (Friday evening) to the 23rd (mid-afternoon on Sunday). This weekend is still well

before the main crime festival season, meaning that we can appeal to festival-goers who have yet to become 'festival weary'. We will also attract authors who are not yet jaded by several festival appearances, meaning that we can offer our audiences fresh, vibrant and unique events.

## **Conclusion**

With increased numbers registering for tickets and expanding follower-engagement on social media, the audience predictions for a physical festival in Aberystwyth in 2023 are looking very positive.

Funding will be sought from the Welsh Government's Major Events Unit, the Arts Council for Wales 'Create' lottery fund and Literature Wales's Create fund. We will also provide ongoing opportunities for supporters to donate to the festival and solicit commercial sponsors.

### Charity Commission Receipts and Payments Account

|                                       |                    | Unrestricted Funds | Restricted funds | Endowment Funds | Total Funds |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| <b>A1 Reciepts</b>                    |                    |                    |                  |                 |             |
|                                       | Unrestricted Funds | 5,273              |                  |                 | 5,273       |
|                                       | Restricted Funds   |                    | 975              |                 | 975         |
|                                       | Ticket sales       | 1,205              |                  |                 | 1,205       |
|                                       |                    |                    |                  |                 | 0           |
|                                       |                    |                    |                  |                 | 0           |
|                                       |                    |                    |                  |                 | 0           |
|                                       |                    |                    |                  |                 |             |
|                                       |                    | 6,477              | 975              | 0               | 7,452       |
|                                       |                    |                    |                  |                 |             |
| <b>A2 Assets and investment sales</b> |                    |                    |                  |                 |             |
|                                       | None               |                    |                  |                 |             |
|                                       |                    |                    |                  |                 |             |
|                                       |                    | 0                  | 0                | 0               | 0           |
|                                       |                    |                    |                  |                 |             |
| <b>A3 Payments</b>                    |                    |                    |                  |                 |             |
|                                       | Speaker Fees       |                    | 700              |                 | 700         |
|                                       | Production Costs   | 900                |                  |                 | 900         |
|                                       | Travel Expenses    |                    | 82               |                 | 82          |
|                                       | Organiser Fees     | 1,000              |                  |                 | 1,000       |
|                                       | Website            | 227                |                  |                 | 227         |
|                                       |                    |                    |                  |                 |             |
|                                       |                    | 2,127              | 782              | 0               | 2,909       |

|   |      |       |     |   |       |
|---|------|-------|-----|---|-------|
| <b>A4 Assets and investment Purchases</b> |      |       |     |   |       |
|   | None |       |     |   |       |
|   |      |       |     |   |       |
|   |      | 0     | 0   | 0 | 0     |
|   |      |       |     |   |       |
|   |      |       |     |   |       |
| <b>B1 Cash Funds</b>                      |      | 4,350 | 193 | 0 | 4,544 |
|   |      |       |     |   |       |
|   |      | 4,350 | 193 | 0 | 4,544 |
|   |      |       |     |   |       |
| <b>B2 Other Monetry Assets</b>            |      | 0     | 0   | 0 | 0     |
|   | None |       |     |   |       |
|   |      | 0     | 0   | 0 | 0     |
|   |      |       |     |   |       |
| <b>B3 Investment Assets</b>               |      |       |     |   |       |
|   | None |       |     |   |       |
|   |      | 0     | 0   | 0 | 0     |
|   |      |       |     |   |       |