

Local crime fiction writer Peter Ritchie chats to The Edinburgh Reporter



Local crime fiction writer Peter Ritchie signed a five book deal with Black and White Publishing this year.

The first book, 'Cause of Death' was launched last month at a [special event](#) at Waterstones store in Princes Street.

Peter took part in a question and answer session conducted by former Lothian and Borders Police Deputy Chief Constable Tom Wood in front of an invited audience.

Ahead of that event, Peter told The Edinburgh Reporter: "I've been writing crime fiction about five years now. Before that I dabbled with poetry and short stories which are all in a drawer now.

"I have had four books published plus one that I have finished last year but I have signed a book contract with Black and White and they are publishing from the beginning again and have re-edited the original books. They all feature the same character.

"It was terrifying writing the first book because you don't know and have no idea whether it is rubbish or not. The critics can be really harsh and in the 'e' world, people tear even the best of authors up so I do get slightly panicked when a book is finished.

"I had an idea for years about a detective who had been hit by a car and was lying in a road thinking about his end. That was the prologue for the first book, and that's what I wrote when I first started.

I honestly had no idea what was coming next, then suddenly Grace appeared along with the story of Northern Ireland. Of course Northern Ireland becomes important probably because it had quite an effect on me from when I worked across there.

“Although there is a serial killer in the first book, I have tried to stay away from that subject in the rest of the books. Scotland seems to be knee deep in serial killers and bodies in crime fiction so I have tried to make them more authentic I suppose.

“I will never be able to convince the people who know me that the characters in the books are fictional and are not based on real people but of course you do draw on what you have seen and heard.

“For example, one of the small incidents that happens in book two was an act of incredible humanity which concerned a death and involved a priest

“This actually changed the way I thought about people. I was going through a stage where I think I was becoming a bit cynical but what I saw this man do changed me completely.”

In [‘Cause of Death’](#) Peter draws on his wide experience as an investigator to draw an authentic picture of how criminals, their victims and the detectives who try to catch them think, act and feel.

The book follows the fortunes of Detective Chief Inspector Grace Macallan whose career has hit a serious roadblock. When a covert police operation in Northern Ireland goes badly wrong, she’s faced with a painful decision – lie to save a young officer’s career, or tell the truth and ruin her own reputation.

Peter began his working life at 15 as a deep sea fisherman before joining the police service and moving through the ranks of CID/Murder Squad/Regional Crime Squad in Scotland.

He then went on to manage the Organised Crime Unit in the National Criminal Intelligence Service in London where he ran a multi-agency team drawn from various branches of the law enforcement and the security services. This was a unique concept at the time and Peter travelled to many parts of the world in this role. He was subsequently appointed as the UK Liaison Officer to Europol in The Hague where he spent five years.

He returned to Lothian & Borders heading the Major Crime Team before taking on an advisory role for a project in Croatia.

Following his retiral he worked on a number of private investigations before spending the next few years as part of the public inquiry team looking into the murder of the LVF leader Billy Wright in the Maze Prison.

He also worked on a public inquiry into the death of eighteen patients in the Vale of Leven Hospital from a hospital acquired infection.