

Author Bios

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Cozy paranormal mystery author of the humorous and quintessentially English Amanda Cadabra series with suspense and magic.

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British author Holly's love of stories flowered from long experience of non-fiction writing, photography and videography, into the Amanda Cadabra series.

Having read and re-read Agatha Christie and JRR Tolkien's Lord of the Rings from childhood, the creation of cosy paranormal mysteries was the natural choice.

3.

Cat adorer and chocolate lover, British author Holly Bell is a photographer and video maker when not creating novels. She had long experience of non-fiction writing before being told she could write cosy mysteries.

Holly devoured all of the Agatha Christie books long before she knew that Miss Marple was the godmother of the Cosy Mystery. Her devotion to JRR Tolkien's Lord of the Rings meant that her first literary creation in this area would have to be a cosy paranormal.

Having derived immense delight from the adventure of writing Amanda Cadabra and The Hidey-Hole and its sequels, Holly has more in the pipeline.

Interview Questions

How did you get from writing non-fiction to fiction? That's quite a leap.

I've written a lot of reviews of films and songs, each of those is basically a story. My degree is in history, which is again, a lot of stories both fact and fiction, if you include literature. I have also been a photographer and videographer for many years and if a picture paints a thousand words then a video has an even broader canvas, but again each tells a tale. In hindsight, it was only a matter of time before my first loves, all works of fiction would find a literary outlet.

Your books are quintessentially English and yet your stories are full of characters from diverse cultural backgrounds. How do those two things go together?

I knew from the start that my stories would be set in a village, and as a city girl it would have to be one on the edge of a metropolis so that I could understand it. As a Brit, it would be an English village and one on the edge of London would inevitably reflect the diversity of that capital.

A feature of villages can be a tendency to exclusivity and *Sunken Madley* has that in that it distinguishes, in a humorous fashion, between those who are long-standing residents, regardless of their cultural heritage, and those who have just moved in or only visiting. Hence we have the best of both worlds, and English, or rather a British, village with essentially the characteristics of those in PG Wodehouse books or *Cold Comfort Farm* or the *Ealing Comedies*.

Cozy paranormal mysteries have a certain formula. How is the Amanda Cadabra series distinctive?

Amanda is a different sort of witch. She's a craftsperson like some other cozy heroines, a furniture restorer but she's asthmatic. She is, in fact, disabled. She can't run, jump, chase villains or survive for long in dusty attics and cellars. On the other hand she has a magical familiar who is in a sense a service cat.

Sleuths are normally super-observant. However Amanda is also on the spectrum and that gives her both intellectual advantages and blind spots. Unlike Miss Marple there are a lot of things, especially about people that she just doesn't see, and anyone of the autism/Aspergers spectrum will recognise and relate to that.

Her life depends on her secrecy regarding her magical powers, so she has to be unobtrusive. She can't afford to be out there, to be sexy, sassy or snarky. Although actually it's in her nature to be retiring and circumspect.

The genre you write within is light entertainment. Is that all that you are trying to provide or are there any deeper messages in your books?

The diverse community in which people are accepting of one of another is something that I hope will inspire acceptance. Lessons I've learned in life I do pass on through the voice of Granny and Grandpa and Chief Inspector Hogarth. Also, the books carry a message of respect for the use of power and that responsibilities come with extraordinary abilities.

Above all though, I want to show the best of people, of the world, to encourage optimism and the belief that good will triumph. I want people to put down the book at the end and feel happier, lighter, more hopeful, empowered and complete than they did before. If they do, then my work is done ... until the next book!

Cozy witches are usually at the heart of a family or community. Why have you chosen not to follow that trend?

It's true, she's not at the hub of the community but she's loved. She has a very small family, just her grandparents, and her surrogate aunt. In the UK and the US a growing number of people live solo and a lot of them like it. Amanda represents those. She is content and at the same time has the desire to share her life with the right person at the right time. I think that's a healthy example, and one that may comfort and encourage readers who are by themselves in one way or another.

Also although the villagers sometimes irritate her she's unfailingly kind and thoughtful towards them. I hope that shows that you don't have to be sociable to be a good person.

Are your books chick lit?

The main character is female but I think she'd be in the same boat if she were male. Romance has a back seat in the books. Amanda does meet men who are attractive or find her attractive in some way but it's expressed in communication or her thoughts about them. There is a growing connection with another character but their professional relationship keeps them in a formal holding pattern.

So yes, there's a romantic thread but it's subtle and a sub-plot. If chick lit is aimed at young single women I'd say most of my readers are not in that demographic and for that reason alone the series wouldn't fit into the chick lit category.

I see the attraction of story writing but why cozy paranormal mystery? Why is it important to you personally?

I'm a great believer in feel-better entertainment whether it's a book, film, performance or visual art. Cozy paranormal mystery is escapist in a positive way, it combines magic, humour and a puzzle. The authors that have journeyed with me through life and give me those things are in particular CS Lewis, Tolkien, Agatha Christie and Georgette Heyer. I've come back to them again and again. They have been the supporting trees in me that have borne fruit and that fruit is, naturally, cozy paranormal mysteries. In this way, I can give my readers what those authors have given me.

Are there any universal themes in your books?

The triumph of good over evil, is the most obvious.

But I think many people do live covert lives of one kind or another because of being or feeling different and that those differences will be unacceptable to those around them. Even some jobs require great discretion. The main character's

need to keep her witchcraft secret is something that many readers will relate to either for themselves or someone they know.

What are the challenges of touching on serious themes in writing cozy mysteries?

It's important to keep things light. This is entertainment after all. Even moments of tension need to be quickly followed with relief or humour. The signposts to deeper levels need to be apparent for those looking for them and easily ignored by readers who just want to enjoy the plot.

Above all, if you had to sum up in one word what you want your books to inspire, what would it be?

Laughter.

Sample Feature Article

The paperback version of the *Amanda Cadabra and the Rise of Sunken Madley* is about to be released. This is the fourth in the British humorous cozy paranormal mystery series by UK author Holly Bell.

While each book has a self-contained mystery, there is a connecting story arc that readers will want to follow through Book 4. Readers who prefer the touchy-feely experience of a real paper book will be eagerly awaiting the launch. The Kindle version is already on Amazon, and the paperback will be available from 29th October in time for Hallowe'en.

After the success of the two free days on the Kindle store of Book 1 with the ebook release of Book 4, from 29th – 31st October, Book 2, *Amanda Cadabra and the Cellar of Secrets* will also be free to download from Amazon.

In Book 4 We finally come face to face with the notorious Flamgoynes, arch-rivals of Amanda's grandmother's family. Inspector Trelawney, emotionally challenged by the emerging truth of his magical past, once again has his understanding of himself and his history changed by recovered memories. There are unexpected encounters, connections, courage, a body, naturally, the significance of Sunken Madley's legacy, touching moments and above all, revelations.

Amanda Cadabra and The Rise of Sunken Madley has new details on the village map. We get to know stately home, The Grange better and a plan of the principal rooms is included. Foodies especially will enjoy an updated glossary of British English.

The first book in the series, *Amanda Cadabra and The Hidey-Hole Truth* was published at the end of August last year with a sequel release every three to four months.

Holly has written many reviews, each of which follows a story. Her degree is in history, which is again, stories both fact and fiction, if you include literature. She has also been a photographer and videographer for many years, and if a picture paints a thousand words, then a video has an even broader canvas. It was only a matter of time before her first loves, all works of fiction, would find a literary outlet.

'I'm a great believer in feel-better entertainment,' says Holly, 'whether it's a book, film, performance or visual art. The cozy paranormal mystery is escapist in a positive way; it combines magic, humour and a puzzle.'

Holly Bell lives in the UK and draws on a rich frame of reference. Lifelong favourite authors are CS Lewis, JRR Tolkien, Agatha Christie and Georgette Heyer. As she says:

'I've come back to them again and again. They have been the supporting trees in me that have borne fruit, and that fruit is, naturally, cozy paranormal mysteries. In this way, I can give my readers what those authors have given me.'

Holly is a regular contributor to the Books Go Social Magazine, and her latest article has just appeared in their edition for Hallow'een.

Reviews

'A Cozy Mystery That Had Me Hooked.'

I loved this book and couldn't put it down. It's got everything that I look for in a 5-star read; great scenes that get the adrenaline pumping, an intelligent mystery or two to get the little grey cells whirling, nail biting tension and well written humour (there may even be a bit of romance on the horizon for our heroine).'

Goodreads, Flora Gatehouse reviewer – *Amanda Cadabra and The Hidey-Hole Truth*

Dec 16, 2018 Krystyna rated it it was amazing

'The past has bearings on the present

Awesome. Quite different to the first book but a wonderful read. Spies, ghosts and magic in an enthralling tale that spans the years.'

Amanda Cadabra and The Cellar of Secrets

May 23, 2019 Paula Ptomey rated it it was amazing

'I received a free copy of Amanda Cadabra and the Flawless Plan for an honest review. I LOVED THIS STORY!! Holly Bell has done it again!'

Amanda Cadabra and The Flawless Plan

Oct 07, 2019 Lorna rated it: it was amazing

'Fabulous series!

There is something very addictive about this series. I so want to know who is a Flamgoyne and is there going to be romance between Amanda and the Inspector?

These mysteries are well written and I am drawn into Sunken Madly straight away. I can picture everything clearly and am living life along side Amanda as she tries to work out who killed her family and why.

Definitely recommend these books they are endearing and make you smile.'

Amanda Cadabra and The Rise of Sunken Madley

'An enchanting page-turner.'

Tim Brown, Author - *Amanda Cadabra and The Hidey-Hole Truth*

'This was a fun, light read ... Buy it, read it, and enjoy it, just for the fun of it. I'm now anxiously awaiting the next book in the series.'

Jude, Reader - *Amanda Cadabra and The Hidey-Hole Truth*

Netgalley

Amanda S, Reviewer

'Humor. Witches. Mystery. You have me hooked. Amanda is hilarious and fun and I love this story. I swear, this kind of genre is my kryptonite.'

Anna Maria G, Reviewer

'It's the second book I read in this series and I enjoyed both. It's entertaining, enjoyable and well written. It was great to meet again the lovely cast of characters. The mystery was good and entertaining. I look forward to reading another installment in this series. Highly recommended! Many thanks to the publisher and Netgalley for this ARC, all opinions are mine.'

Amanda Cadabra and The Cellar of Secrets

Aileen G, Reviewer

'A lovely light-hearted mystery concerning a young witch, her familiar, ghostly helpers and furniture restoration. Made me chuckle. I'm really looking forward to the next one in the series to see where the cliff hangers from this one go.

A most unusual sort of mystery. I enjoyed it. The britishness of the writing didn't put me off at all. It's a gentle sort of mystery and I'm looking forward to seeing what happens next in Amanda's life.'

#AmandaCadabraAndTheHideyHoleTruth #NetGalley

'An enjoyable and humorous tale with engaging lead characters.'

Bouncing Tigger Reviews

'Thoroughly enjoyable with charm and suspense.'

Princess Fuzzypants - Reviewer

Siddhesh

5.0 out of 5 stars Compelling.

21 September 2018

Format: Kindle Edition

I was mesmerized. I never had a liking towards this genre but I couldn't simply stop reading. Keeps you engaged and forced to keep reading.

Amazon India

Amazon US

4.1/5 with 27 Reviews

Amazon UK

5/5 10 Ratings

Goodreads

4.2/5 125 ratings, 23 Reviews

Facebook

Katherine Williams DeMoure-Aldrich recommends Holly Bell Author.

11 May

Delightful, enjoyable, well-written, very British cozy mysteries with locations so well described that you feel that you're there. Each character is well-rounded and stays true to their character in the book. It's an open window into village life.'

Philippa Shallcrass recommends Holly Bell Author.

14 August 2018 ·

'The story is a real page turner. Beautifully written, great story. I got to know the village and its people. I hope there are more to come.'

Stephen Lambert reviewed Holly Bell Author – 5 star

2 November 2018

'I really enjoyed Amanda Cadabra and the Hidey Hole Truth. Once I got started I pretty much kept going until I finished. I was kinda sorry it ended. Really looking forward to the next one.'

Alex Morrison recommends Holly Bell Author.

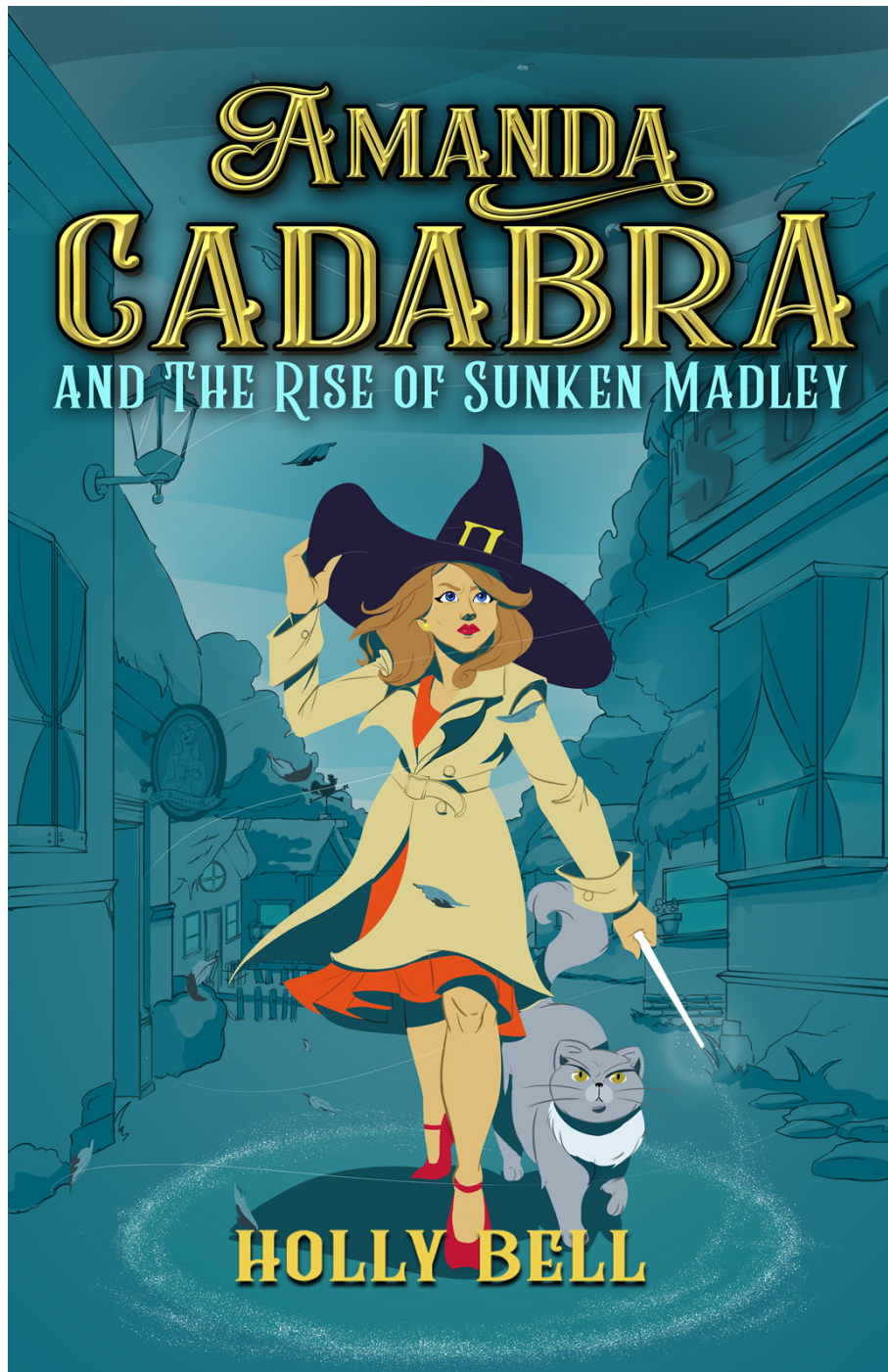
18 November 2018 ·

'A lovely read, thank you Holly Bell x'

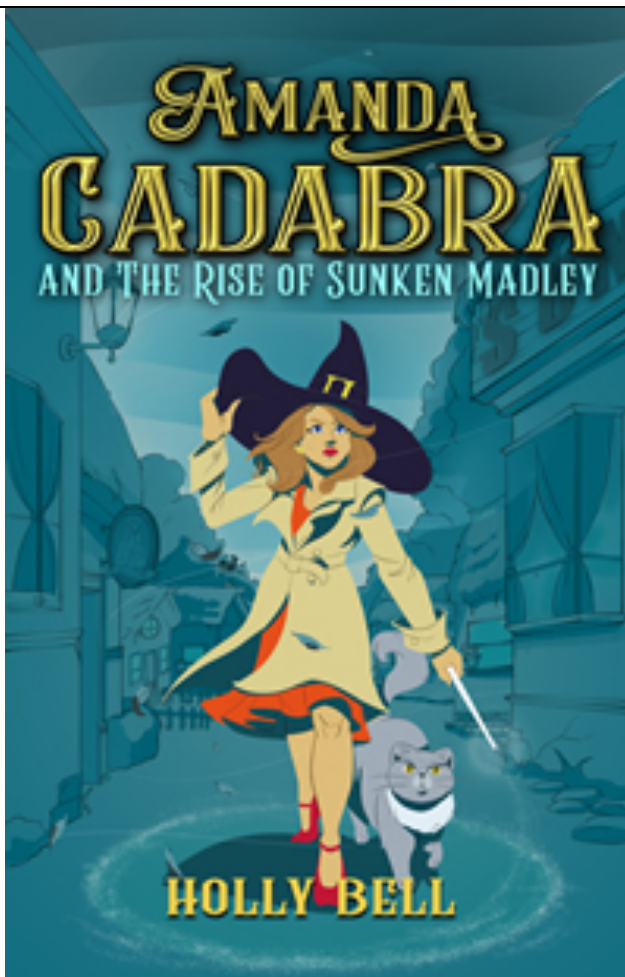
Author Image



Latest Book Cover



One-Sheet:



Amanda Cadabra and The Rise of Sunken Madley

The British humorous cozy paranormal
mysteries

by Holly Bell

Can you weather the storm? Amanda, covert witch and asthmatic furniture restorer, finds a body at The Grange. Accident or murder? It matters; she had no alibi.

But a far more pressing problem is afoot. The Flamogynes are about to attack her village. Was it they who sent her unpleasant family over the Cornish cliff all of those years ago? Can Amanda buy the intrepid Inspector Trelawney the hour he needs to complete his own dangerous mission?

Will her familiar, grumpy cat Tempest, stay awake long enough to help? In the moment of truth, will she stand alone as her recurring dream shows her? Or will she see The Rise of Sunken Madley?

Action, adventure, humour, spies, ghosts, murder and revelations abound in this climactic tale.
Book 4 in the Amanda Cadabra Series

Title: Amanda Cadabra and The Rise of Sunken Madley

Author: Holly Bell

Category: Mystery: Cozy Paranormal

Format: eBook, paperback

ASIN: B07GZQH8P8

Pages: 289 pages

Ebook Price: \$5.99 international prices vary

Publication date: 30 August 2018

Paperback size: 5.25 x 8 inches

Price: \$5.99 International prices vary.

Available from: Amazon

Reviews

'The tension in this quintessentially English cozy paranormal mystery franchise just stepped up a notch; I couldn't stop reading.' Flora, Book Reviewer

5 stars on Amazon.com

Publicity

Paperback launch: 29 Oct. Series Book 2 on free KDP promotion 29-31 Oct.

Books Go Social twitter campaign.

Book Trailer

Launch video posts on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest and YouTube channel.



About Holly

British non-fiction writer, photographer and videographer turned novelist, inspired by a lifetime of reading of Agatha Christie, Tolkien, CS Lewis, Georgette Heyer and PG Wodehouse to write the Amanda Cadabra series of humorous cozy paranormal mysteries.