

# will shine light different way

and worked part-time at Aberdeen University as a tutor in theology, as well as working for Aberdeenshire Council.

"Pennan is a place that has changed from a few hundred people a couple of centuries ago, through the great storm of 1953 that ripped through the village, to the situation now where there are only a dozen or so full-timers," he said.

"Pennan still attracts plenty of visitors and second homers and, inevitably, some visitors come because of the cult following that the film Local Hero still generates.

"But many people have a generational attachment to the area and the village, of course.

"This fundamental issue, surrounding the type and quality of relationship with land and water, and

the attachment to where you live, is an underlying issue of the spirit that is reflected in the Monas Novels.

"But Pennan does not need books or film for folk to appreciate the spirit that rocks the creels in the harbour. It was already there and has been for centuries.

"That is because Pennan is a love song of sorts, a Burns stanza with a mystical storyline infused with Scottish mist, sometimes solid and sometimes transitory. And like the haer, it is mischievous and eternal.

"It is a very Scottish spirit that to really appreciate you have to live it out daily, experientially, and then it infuses within you. That is the backdrop to the Monas novels."



Pennan author Glen Reynolds.

## Colourful career of writer who takes spiritual life seriously

GLEN Reynolds started his professional life in London as the youngest partner in a leading solicitor's law practice, specialising in celebrity libel work.

His caseload was, however, of a far more clandestine variety - involving investigative journalism and corruption, not least as a lawyer for the magazine Private Eye before running the litigation department at Mirror Group Newspapers.

Perhaps not by coincidence, for him the one person he met that stands out in all the celebrity clientele was David Cornwell, who writes under the pen name John le Carré.

He went on to work in Colombia, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Russia, South Africa and China before turning his attention to a more spiritual dimension.

"I worked for a year among the Zulu population of Kwa Zulu Natal in South Africa, and that was a beginning of a turning point for me," Mr Reynolds said.

"It was the time of the first Truth and Reconciliation hearings and for a year, as I ploughed my way through war zones and investigated aspects of corruption after the apartheid era, for which I received a personal commendation from Nelson Mandela, I began to study religion - or at least took the spiritual life more seriously.

"All of that led to me receiving a doctorate in theology in the UK. That is how I became able to teach theology at King College, Aberdeen."

"It was a woman who brought me to Scotland, first to Strichen and then to Pennan," he said.

"Before that, I just had so much adrenaline coursing through my body that I needed a release. I had been living in Soho in London when I was in the UK, and during the eighties and nineties my drug of choice was alcohol.

"Monas in the books has an alcoholic past and now restricts his liquid satisfaction to being a connoisseur of very good coffee."

These days Mr Reynolds works as a clinical hypnotherapist focusing on clients with addiction issues.

Now, and many years of sobriety later, a question remains as to what it is about Pennan that causes people either to write about it, to paint it and film it?

He suggests that there is a central theme that combines the attraction of Pennan - and for that matter the village and neighbouring villages - with the context of the novels.

"Local Hero is described as a comedy but, as with the Monas novels, it reflects a serious and very human condition: the search for true success, true fulfilment in an otherworldliness which is reflected in the Monas novels by incorporating cutting edge science and its ever closer relationship with the paranormal.

"In Local Hero, it was the stars and the solar system that did it. You may recall that in the Forsyth film, the Texan oil magnate Felix Happer (Burt Lancaster) considered at first that it would be a good idea for a small Scottish fishing village to be bought by Knox Oil and Gas, so that it could develop its business.

"And then, having failed in his project to win over the community and build a refinery, the character Mac returns to the ethical and moral bankruptcy of a Houston apartment that has as much materialism as he can want.

"Mac stands at his kitchen table, reflecting on a missed opportunity for changing where and how he lives his life. For me, the crucial part of the film is when he pulls from his coat pocket a handful of stones taken from the shore when he was in Scotland, and at that moment and thousands of miles away you hear the phone ringing at the now famous red phone box in Pennan.

"It's a personal view but for some people, for the USA read Aberdeen and for Mac read why many people come to Pennan - to escape from something material. Sometimes that can be from themselves as much as the past."

Mr Reynolds began several years back to explore the basis of water as the next cause of international tension, after oil.

"This, along with an interest in the new understanding of the paranormal interaction of science and faith, drew me to creating unique characters fit for the issues of the 21st century.

"But in truth, the other reasons why I began sketching out these characters is that I grew increasingly concerned about a number of matters: the growth of militarism, how Muslims are increasingly

portrayed in the western media and in cultural perception, and finally I hated the way we are treating our planet.

"In my character sketches, a spiritual force evolves from both a Christian west and a Muslim east, to unite in confronting the emerging corporate greed and political plate shifting around the primary mover of life on this planet - water."

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