



# Banffshire Journal



**Author puts Pennan in the spotlight** Pages 12 and 13

**Tourism chief focuses on strategy for region** Page 24

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## Ton-up motorist caught in road safety campaign

A MOTORIST has been caught by police driving at 101mph on the A98 Macduff to Fraserburgh road.

The 24-year-old man was seen driving at the speed in a 70mph zone on the route near to the Ardlaw junction.

The patrol was part of Operation Cedar (Challenge, Educate, Detect and Reduce), a road safety campaign designed to encourage drivers to take more responsibility on the roads.

During the course of the operation three other drivers were detected and dealt with for speeding.

Five vehicles were found to be breaching other offences such as defective lights, which resulted in two drivers being issued with notifications to rectify the faults.

One person was stopped for failing to obey a red light and one vehicle was stopped without a valid MOT.

Numerous other vehicles were stopped during the course of the day and were found to be in good working order without any offences being detected and the overall feedback from the public was positive.

Sergeant Ronnie Kain, who oversaw the operation, said: "Although there are no issues with the vast majority of drivers and vehicles on the road, I would like to remind the public to check their vehicles including lights and tyres to ensure their car is roadworthy."

"Motorists should always obey the highway code and road traffic legislation and also ensure that all documentation is valid and in place for the driver and vehicle."

Teenager aims to start fitness career following kidney op success

# Michael punches above his weight after transplant



Turriff lad Michael Morrice received a kidney transplant and now keeps fit through boxing training with Deveron Valley Boxing Club. Picture: Lyn MacDonald. Image No. 032934

By KYLE RITCHIE

A TURRIFF teenager has proved he is fighting fit after overcoming a life-threatening rare kidney disease.

For four years Michael Morrice (17) battled with a condition that forms cysts on the kidneys and gradually kills the organs.

However, hope and relief came for him and his family when a suitable donor was found and he received a kidney transplant.

The operation was successful and the teenager no longer had to endure gruelling 11-hour sessions on a dialysis machine.

Now nearly three years on he is very active, with ambitions to pursue a career in sports coaching or personal training, and keeps fit at Macduff's Deveron Valley Boxing Club.

Before the transplant the condition debilitated him to the point he struggled to walk up and down stairs.

He said: "The transplant has been life-changing for me."

"It has enabled me to

Continued on page 2

## IN THE NEWS

### On the crest of a wave



Boat festival receives support which secures future.

Full story on Page 2

### An oarsome experience



Rowing club holds successful launch day at Banff Marina.

Full story on Pages 6 and 7

### Building heritage



Cottage's past comes to life thanks to Portsoy group.

Full story on Page 21

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# Trio of novels on village in a

By KYLE RITCHIE

INTEREST has been growing in the publishing world for a series of three completed novels with a Pennan theme.

The Monas Novels are written by village resident Glen Reynolds, who is a Franciscan communications adviser to the RC Bishop of Aberdeen, a libel lawyer, a military intelligence analyst and clinical hypnotherapist.

Despite approaches, the author is determined to hold out for Scottish literary representation and prefers the prospect of a long-term publisher based in Scotland.

The reasons for this decision may lie in the fact that behind the novels are extremely personal connections made in the books with himself, including both the passion he has for the village in which he now lives, and the rather clandestine details surrounding the author's own past.

"I want the deal to be good for the region as well as for me," he said.

There is some cause for optimism that a literary offer is in the making. Overnight the novels' Facebook page received nearly 17,000 likes and the website [www.themonasnovels.com](http://www.themonasnovels.com) accompanying the project has proved highly topical in light of recent news stories.

"The Monas novels all feature Pennan and nearby archaeological sites, plus places including Aberdeen and major global cities elsewhere, but the idea behind them is that they will hopefully form part of the growing literary and film interest being generated in the area," Mr Reynolds said.

"I want, as an author, to be part of the regeneration that is needed in the coastal villages of Aberdeenshire."

The contemporary setting of the novels combines religion, science and the paranormal, with a dash of modern day politics, all focusing on the prospect of global conflict over water.

The books have two unconventional main characters in a relationship that "will hopefully kick down the door of stereotypes and prejudice, as they involve a partnership and unfulfilled love of a Muslim Iranian woman and a Scottish priest born in Aberdeen", according to the author.

"Think Iranian woman with a shade of Amy Winehouse, and a Roman Catholic priest who is a Father Brown of the 21st century, and you have a clue as to their chemistry," he said.

Mr Reynolds has spent much time working abroad, including countries where radical Islam was on the move.

"I once witnessed a man being executed in Iran and stared into his eyes as the final death procession went past," he said. "You do not forget that."

"Nargess, the Iranian woman in the novels, is rescued from a similar fate of stoning. But an important point to grasp in these novels is that they do not portray an Islamic woman who makes concessions convenient to the western world.

"She is proud to wear her hijab, proud to call herself a Muslim and is proud to be a strong woman.

"In fact, she may well be the stronger of the two main characters. What she wants is the freedom to choose how she lives and dresses."

After moving to Pennan in 2007, Mr Reynolds and his wife raised a family in the village while he wrote

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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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