

Former Lothian and Borders' detective launches debut novel



Former Lothian and Borders' detective Peter Ritchie's debut novel is now available on Amazon and already positive customer reviews have taken the book to an impressive number seven in the noir charts.

Drawing on this wide experience as an investigator, Peter has written a trilogy of novels about a fictional detective, Grace den Herder, and has attempted to draw an authentic picture of how criminals, their victims and the detectives who try to catch them think, act and feel.

Noble Cause is the first in the trilogy about Grace den Herder who leaves an unhappy childhood and a promising career as a lawyer behind and decides to take on the toughest of challenges: joining the Royal Ulster Constabulary, which is still involved in the fight against terrorist organisations in Northern Ireland, where her performance and dedication leads to a spectacular rise through the ranks of Special Branch. Her work brings professional success but difficulty in forming relationships outside the world of counter-terrorist operations.

She runs an informant whose information leads to an operation that goes badly wrong, with a death in police custody and the subsequent murder of the informant, who is uncovered and killed by his organisation. In the aftermath, den Herder makes a decision to give evidence against a colleague and is abandoned by her force and her married lover as a result.

She leaves Northern Ireland and rebuilds her career as a

detective in the newly formed Major Crime Team in Lothian and Borders. The team finds initial success investigating a brutal home invasion gang who have killed during a robbery. At the same time, brutal attacks on street prostitutes escalate into a series of murders and one of the main suspects is a high profile Edinburgh lawyer.

He is eventually arrested and convicted, although den Herder is uneasy about the result. When another prostitute is murdered most believe it to be a copycat crime, but Den Herder decides to reinvestigate. The revelations and subsequent chaos that result tear the Major Crime Team apart.

The second story, *The Shortest Days of the Year* and will be published in the spring, whilst the third story, 'Red Sky in the Morning', is underway and will be published later in 2014.

✘ Peter started 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 and Borders heading the Major Crime Team before taking on an advisory role for a project in Croatia. Following his retirement 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.

Earlier today, Peter took time out from his busy schedule to tell The Edinburgh Reporter about the books and the lead character. He said: "I've been very fortunate to have a career that let me operate in a variety of roles and live and work in other countries. Certainly a long way from my initial beat days in Musselburgh! I'd always had the ambition to try and write but was too wrapped up in my work, although the ideas were in my head for years.

"I've always been intrigued with the interaction between people involved in investigation and intelligence work, particularly when things go wrong. I've tried to build interesting characters in the books including the villains and dipped below the surface a bit with them. Although the stories and characters are fictional I have used my own experience as a detective to create the storylines. I have used humour particularly in the second book and sometimes it can be mixed together with the grim reality of the job. In the second book I slip in three brief incidents that happened to me personally and have never forgotten to this day.

"The main character is Grace den Herder who starts her career in Belfast and Northern Ireland is always in the background even though she moves to Edinburgh. The second book brings in Glasgow and the third introduces characters from Newcastle. I've done this to try and give Grace a broad landscape to work on. It's interesting that even at this early stage I've noticed that women who've read the first book and manuscripts of the other two have really connected with the lead character and her struggles. I've tried to avoid the usual clichés of a woman working in a male dominated environment.

"The second book is finished and ready to publish in May and I'm over halfway through the third which should be out around August. I am thinking about another book but that's still in planning."

To buy the book click [here](#)

