



Adventure of a lifetime... if the author has his way Robert Auty talks fantasy with Peter Richardson, explaining why he developed a pacy style that could be easier for readers to get into than Tolkien. Fantasy fiction, full of goblins and dragons, and heroes with impossible-to-pronounce names, languished a while in the realms of books read only by geeks and teenage boys.

Then it was dragged kicking and screaming out of the doldrums by Peter Jackson and his Oscar-winning film productions of the Lord of the Rings trilogy. It became cool to be into fantasy. Heck, even girls were admitting to reading it.

*Robert Auty hopes that this resurgence in the genre will mean good sales for his debut crack at writing. His first book, *Trance Warriors - The Siege of Scarn*, has just been published and the follow-up is already waiting in the wings.*

Robert, 42, from Heysham, enjoyed reading fantasy fiction for years before first trying his hand at writing in 1998.

*Ironically, given that the widening of fantasy fiction appeal to a larger audience is - at least in part - down to Tolkien, Robert has never been a big fan. He admits finding it difficult to properly get into *Lord of the Rings* . . . but loved the films.*

Rather than Tolkien, it was his favourite authors David Gemmel and David Eddings that have given him inspiration for his first novel.

He currently works as a manager with a distribution company in Lancaster, but would love to be able to give up the day job and write for a living. A dream he admits is long term at the moment but he hopes will one day become reality.

**Trance Warriors - The Siege of Scarn* came into being six years before being published in the shape of a two-page premise drafted in the middle of writing an entirely different novel. But what he'd written gripped his imagination so much that he was driven to write*

more in order to discover what happened to his characters.

Unlike some authors, he doesn't have a final framework of a plot before he starts; instead he lets the story develop as it flows. The ending was as much of a surprise to him as it is to the reader!

The village of Heysham - with quaint cottage-lined streets and a wild coastal headland with mysterious ruined chapel - would make a perfect fantasy world, as would the Lune Valley and Kirkby Lonsdale, another part of the world with which Robert is familiar - it's where his girlfriend lives. However, neither location features in *Trance Warriors*. This world spewed forth from imagination as he sat at his keyboard.

"There was a two-year period when I spent weekend after weekend at the computer writing. It was all-consuming. I must have spent hundreds, if not thousands, of hours working at it," he says. "I was single then," he adds wryly. "But I enjoyed it. It was exciting to write. The adventure carried me along with it, and I would like to go back there. It was a time that I enjoyed."

Robert's fantasy world in *Trance Warriors* is beset with chaos and warfare and inhabited by both the good and the malevolent. The first book in a saga, it follows the struggles of outlaw Connor as he becomes drawn into a battle between good and evil. Vying with both personal and real demons, and grappling with a new role as leader and protector, Connor learns how to develop and use his powers to stop a bloody conflict and bring opposing forces together against a hidden but escalating evil that could destroy the world. Robert is currently working on a number of other writing projects while hoping that *Siege of Scarn* enjoys success. His aim in this first book, he says, is to develop a style of writing that he hopes readers will enjoy. His personal bugbear with fantasy fiction is authors who go on at length with descriptive passages that, while beautiful, do nothing to further the plot. He prefers a sparer style that chases the adventure along. "I don't like verbosity. I prefer work that reads more like a movie script, fast and pacy."

First book completed and second well on the way, he now awaits sales and reviews to see if his ultimate ambition of giving up work to become a full time author is a feasible plan.

