

## Ed Perkins talks to Bournemouth author Suzanne McLeod about vampires, Dorset and DIY

**I**f I met a vampire in the dark, I'd probably scream and hide in a corner," confesses Suzanne

McLeod.

"I'm a bit of wuss like that." Which is surprising for she is the creator of a fictional world full of vampires, ghosts and fairies.

Suzanne, who lives in Dorset, burst on to the scene of fantasy writing last year with her debut novel *The Sweet Scent of Blood*.

Now she has just had published *The Cold Kiss of Death*, the second murder mystery novel in her urban fantasy series based on Genny Taylor, a sidhe fae (type of fairy) who lives in a magical world set in contemporary London.

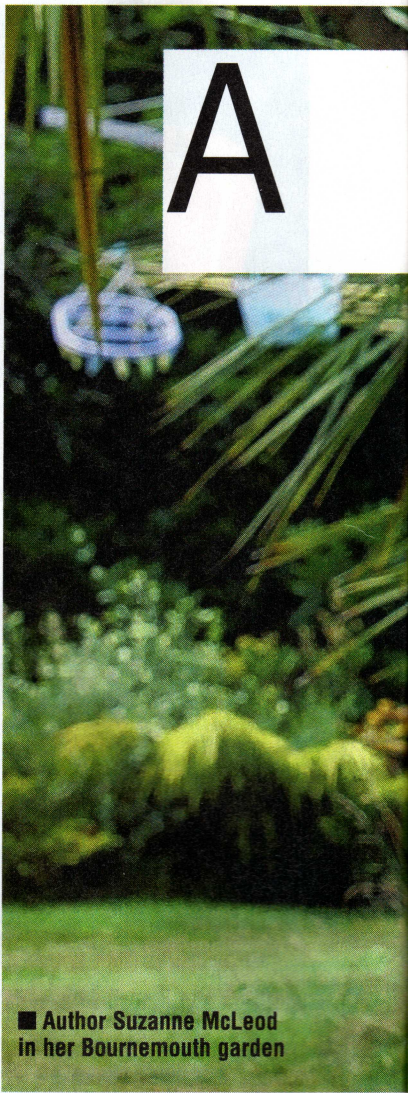
And in the wake of the huge success of the *Twilight* series by American author Stephenie Meyer - made into a film starring Kristen Stewart and Robert Pattinson - the romantic magical fantasy genre is currently buzzing.

Suzanne, who lives in Bournemouth, with her surveyor husband Norman and their two rescue dogs, only began writing five years ago.

But she was quickly picked up by Gollancz, a major UK publisher.

Born in London, her father was in hotel management and the family moved around the country before settling in the Midlands.

A voracious reader, as a child she would devour every book she could get her hands on, from Enid Blyton and Alan Garner to Jane Austen and Dennis Wheatley. Her early jobs included everything from being a cocktail waitress and dance group promoter to working



■ Author Suzanne McLeod in her Bournemouth garden

as a barmaid at Coventry Football Club. Then she embarked on a career in retail for stores like Mothercare and Argus.

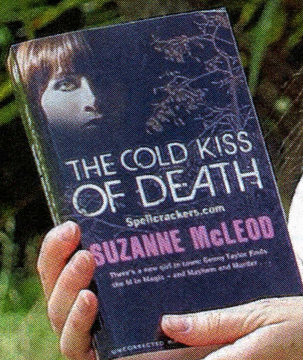
What brought her to Dorset? Other members of her family were already living here and it's where she used to come for holidays as a child. She and Norman moved down from Glasgow some 10 years ago. And she quickly put to use her love of DIY.

"In the past I've done everything from tiling and plumbing to electrics and fitting kitchens and bathrooms," she says, sitting in her spacious, spotless and uncluttered lounge.

"The pleasure is in the creativity. The doing it can be hard work, particularly if you're knocking down walls or pulling up floorboards."

So why did she start writing? "I'd read a lot and was looking for something to fill

# magic touch



my time and read an Adult Education leaflet that dropped through the door. And there was a Writing for Beginners class at Kinson." She enrolled in the class that was run by local writer Della Galton.

"It was brilliant," she said. "You learned all the basics and were given homework which we'd read out the following week. And she encouraged us to enter competitions."

Before Suzanne had time to realise the scope of the achievement, she'd had a story accepted by Accent Press for their Sexy Shorts series. And she's never looked back.

Today Suzanne, 49, still meets up every week with five other writers who met at Della Galton's class, including Malcolm Angel, whose book *Too Few, Too Far* has also been published.

So why urban fantasy? "I think you should write what you like to read and I was lucky, for that was what someone wanted to buy," she smiles.

"I wrote the first book and got a deal for three books through an agent.

"The third book in the series comes out next year and I'm already working on my sixth plot."

Her heroine, Genevieve Taylor, is a sassy, sexy but flawed sidhe who works as an investigator for Spellcheckers.com which sorts out magical problems. And she has been compared with Stephanie Plum, the feisty and fun lead character in top American crime writer Janet Evanovich's *Bounty Hunter* series.

Suzanne says she is flattered by the comparison. "She's fantastic," she says.

Dipped in humour, *The Cold*

*Kiss of Death* story revolves around the murder of one of her human friends... and she finds herself in the frame. Not only that, but she's being badgered by persistent, leather-clad vampires, picked on by witches and haunted by a girl ghost. The book also features Malik the vampire and Finn the satyr with whom she has a bit of a thing.

JK Rowling's *Harry Potter* books ("I love them") helped popularise novels with magic, though Suzanne's own novels are for a more adult audience.

"When you've got magic and the supernatural it can make a murder mystery more interesting," she suggests. "It is more difficult to know what is going to happen next."

So does she believe in the supernatural? I like watching supernatural and science

## firsts and favourites

**First car:** Sky blue Hillman Imp  
**First album or single:** It might have been a Donny Osmond.  
**First home:** A flat I shared with a girlfriend.  
**First job:** In a newsagents selling papers and sweeties.



**Favourite pub or restaurant:** Loch Fyne.  
**Favourite viewpoint:** Branksome beach.  
**Favourite walk:** Hengistbury Head (with our dogs).

## Brownsea Island Books

- 1: *War of the Oaks* by Emma Bull
- 2: *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee
- 3: *Flowers for Algernon* by Daniel Keyes
- 4: *Guilty Pleasures* by Laurell K Hamilton
- 5: *The Devil You Know* by Mike Carey
- 6: *Magic Bites* by Ilona Andrews

fiction programmes... but I don't necessarily believe in ghosts or anything like that." And vampires?

"I don't believe in them. I've never met one," she says, smiling.

Then adds, "At least I don't think I have..."