



"Every time I write something I'm hopefully learning and improving," says Giles Ward

Novel idea

Pictures by Matt Austin

After a lot of thinking about writing a novel, Giles Ward has finally done it. He spoke to Becky Moran

A carpet salesman with a hatred of estate agents and some rather dubious views on eugenics is the unlikely hero of Giles Ward's first novel, *100 Ways To Improve The World*. While the author admits he has little in common with the unfortunate Peter Staines, they do share one ambition — to write.

"It has certainly always been an ambition of mine to write a book," said Giles, who lives in Bramford Speke with his wife and two children.

"I have always loved books and wanted to write one, whatever it turned out like. I've got two boys, aged seven and nine, and I started writing *100 Ways* when they were young babies. To be honest, I wrote it as a hobby with no huge ambition to get it published. I really enjoyed the process, even though it took five years."

Giles grew up in Sheffield, where he toyed with the idea of becoming a journalist before deciding to concentrate on his other love, art. After completing his art foundation course at Sheffield Polytechnic, he moved to Devon to study graphics at Exeter College of Art. He fell in love with the area, and in 1998 he co-founded Chalk & Ward advertising agency in Exeter, where he is creative director. But his early love of writing never left him and after a lifetime of scribbling short stories and novellas, he finally sat down to write that elusive novel.

Once finished, *100 Ways To Improve The World* — an immensely enjoyable tale of murder and lust with a tufted cut pile twist — may well have stayed gathering

dust if it wasn't for the intervention of Giles' wife, Julie. "I didn't really bother telling anyone about it, and I had no real motivation for anyone else to read it," he said. "It was a case of 'this is what I'm enjoying doing and it doesn't matter if I don't finish it'. I would have been quite happy to leave it on the shelf but my wife, Julie, turned round and said let's do something with it."

Julie suggested that Giles gave his novel to Impress Books, academic publishers run by friends at the University of Exeter, in the hope they could advise on the best way of getting it published. Instead, Impress asked to publish it themselves.

"It was very flattering — it all fell into place," said Giles. "It's early days and it has primarily gone to friends and family to begin with, so it's tempting to think people are being really polite. Peter is very myopic and a bit of a bigot. I'm intrigued to see how people are going to take some of the things I've written, especially as the book is in the first person, but the feedback has been extremely positive."

Giles has already started work on his second novel, *The Price of Everything*, and is confident this one won't take quite so long to finish.

"I'm a bit more self-conscious about this one. I never thought anyone would read the first one so I could write what I wanted," he admitted. "Every time I write something I'm hopefully learning and improving. I'm about halfway through and I've been writing it over the last year. Hopefully it will take two years instead of five."

In the meantime, he has no plans to quit the day job, which he says provides valuable inspiration and ideas.

"To become a published author actually earning a decent living is close on impossible — there aren't many who have done it, other than the JK Rowlings and Dan Browns of the world. I don't feel that pressure. Doing my day job I'm creating for clients and it's judged by clients. With a book, I'm writing it for me and I think that's quite valuable. If I was writing it for someone else or thinking what would sell better, that would change the essence of what it is."

For more information log on to www.100waystoimprovetheworld.co.uk.

Competition

Devon Today has five copies of *100 Ways To Improve The World* to give away. For your chance to win a copy, answer the following question: What is the name of the book's hero? Send your answer and contact details to 100 Ways Competition, Devon Today, Heron Road, Sowton, Exeter, Devon EX2 7NF. The competition ends on Friday, December 29, 2006. A winner will be selected at random from the correct entries received by the closing date.

