

# Northwest author's US breakthrough "magic"

**Matt Maguire**

Cracking the New Zealand market is tough, but breaking into the American market is even more of a coup for northwest author Helen Lowe.

Helen Lowe's young adult fantasy novel, *Thornspell*, was picked up by Random House USA last year, and its New Zealand release was celebrated at Fendalton Library on Saturday.

Her debut novel, *Wall Of Night*, was also being published - this time by HarperCollins USA.

Ms Lowe said sometimes she had to pinch herself to believe it was real.

"The best moment was the beginning of last year when I opened up my email and there was a message saying 'there has been an offer made on your book'."

Helen was introduced by thriller writer Andrew Grant at *Thornspell*'s New Zealand book launch where she spoke about the writing process and read from the novel.

A *Thornspell* cake was cut with a sword and members of the group Creative Anachronism acted out the duel between the hero and villain of the book in full armoured dress.

*Thornspell* is a retelling of the story of the fairy-tale *Sleeping Beauty*, but from the perspective of

the prince. This stemmed from an idea that Lowe had back in 1998, although she did not begin writing it until 2005.

"It took me five years to write my debut, *Wall Of Night*, part-time, and there will be three more books in that series, so I thought if I was going to get them done I'd need to write full-time," said Ms Lowe.

"The step from a full-time job at Transit New Zealand to writing was a big one. I enjoyed my job; I just wanted to do more writing."

She gave herself three-and-a-half years to try and "gain some traction", finishing the novel just as that period of time elapsed.

The reaction to *Thornspell* had been pretty positive so far, she said.

Favourable reviews have been given by the prestigious *Kirkus Reviews* magazine as well as *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*.

The reception from the internet has also been warm; the book has received two five-star reviews on Amazon, and blogosphere feedback had been positive and "very encouraging" said Ms Lowe.



Author Helen Lowe in her mystic abode.

Photo: Glen Tregurtha

# Noise contours parties meet

**Hayden Munro**

Christchurch International Airport LTD (CIAL) CEO Rene Bakx and local residents are meeting to try and solve the ongoing dispute about the airport's controversial noise contour policy.

Kiwi homeowner by implementing the strictest noise contour policy in the world, which would devalue properties significantly."

However Mr Bakx said the policy was not

