

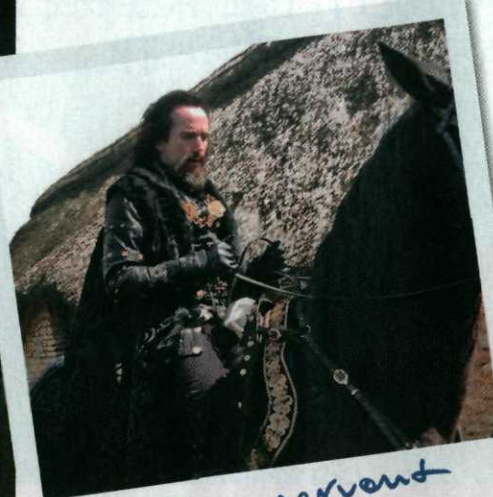
Ben Miller
chronicles a
fanboy's dream:
taking on the
Time Lord –
as the Sheriff
of Nottingham

My Doctor Who diary

“Pull this
one off and
I may be
my sons’
hero for
ever”

BEN MILLER

BEN'S BACKSTAGE SNAPS



Looking nervous
on a horse



A minion relaxed



Classy biscuit caddy
in the Green room



My first outing
as the Sheriff

My kingdom for a horse rider

8 APRIL First day of shooting. I'm about to do some marauding. Somehow, from nowhere, an entire medieval village has been created in the Vale of Glamorgan. I can't believe the budget. On a two-acre plot are at least a dozen wattle houses, kitted out with authentic cooking implements, with suitably ancient breeds of chicken pecking in the dust. I sidle up to one of the crew. Amazing attention to detail, eh? He looks at me strangely.

“It's Cosmeston Medieval Village, Ben. It's a theme park.” I nod sagely. “Do you want to meet your horse?” I am led towards a sable-black beast 15 hands high that looks like the steed of a Norse warrior god. Perched on top of it is

the bass player from Nine Inch Nails. Oh – hang on, I've got a double. And he can ride! This just gets better and better.

Back at base, I bump into Peter Capaldi, who is filming a different episode. He greets me warmly, which is a relief, as the last time I saw him he tried to throttle me with a yard of piano wire. He claims it was part of the play we were doing at the time, *The Ladykillers*, but I have my doubts. He is dressed as the Doctor, and something about the frock coat and the tieless,

buttoned-up white shirt is instantly iconic. Suddenly I place it; that's how Peter always dresses.

So, how is he finding it? “I'm like a kid in a sweet shop,” he says, grinning. “I was meant to have a day off yesterday, but I saw they were shooting a fight with the Daleks, so I came in anyway. Couldn't miss that, could I?” ▷



CUPID'S BOW?
Clara (Jenna Coleman)
takes archery lessons from
Robin Hood (Tom Riley)

WHEN HEROES COLLIDE

Is that a touch of the green eye from the Doctor on meeting Sherwood's finest?



I wield my sword

9 APRIL Swordfight rehearsal. A little humbling. Tom Riley from *Da Vinci's Demons* is playing Robin Hood, and as well as being a devastatingly handsome, impossibly witty and brilliant actor, he is a master of the blade. When I wield my sword I look more like a painter and decorator trying to get some wallpaper up in a hurry.

After five minutes' swashbuckling I am exhausted and call for time out. Tom offers me a carrot stick. I take one, artfully draping my coat over my bag of doughnuts.

Kid in a candy store

17 APRIL Possibly one of the most exciting days of my life. We arrived early at Caerphilly Castle to see hordes of extras thronging the gates. I check the call sheet, which lists the day's business. No sign of a crowd scene. Have they changed the shooting order? My friend on the crew shakes his head. "Those aren't extras. Those are the fans." I have Sonny

to the monitor. At the end of the day, Peter and Jenna sign a *Day of the Doctor* poster for Sonny. Peter signs his name over the picture of Matt Smith, and Sonny and I smile appreciatively. This is the only show in the world where that makes complete logical sense.

Final cut

1 MAY Last day of shooting. The studios here in Cardiff rival anything I've seen in the US, and we have spent the week shooting on colossal interiors with an army of crew.

My last-scene-but-one is my swordfight with Tom Riley. What I hadn't quite counted on was the fact that we rehearsed with wooden swords, but the ones we are shooting with today are very, very metal. After some particularly inept clanging on my part I end up making a new joint in Tom Riley's thumb. He is far too polite to say anything, but when we say our goodbyes I can't help noticing he shakes my hand with his elbow.

For my final scene I am to be winched right into the roof of the studio on a wire, then dropped some three storeys onto a crash mat. Paul Murphy is shooting in a different studio, and directs over the intercom. As I dangle in the rafters, waiting for the first assistant to call it, I can't help feeling that this is a metaphor for the whole job. I've been carried to great

heights by this magnificent team, and had experiences that will last me a lifetime. And now I'm about to be dropped back into reality. "Action!" says the first, and I kick and flail into the abyss, the wire pulling tight inches above the mat.

Everyone applauds. Tears well in my eyes. Then Paul comes over the radio, "Can he do it again? The monitor cut out and I missed that one."

'The last time I saw Peter Capaldi he tried to throttle me'

with me today, and his eyes are out on stalks. One of the true joys of the set is how welcoming it is to children. Whatever's happening in front of the camera, you can guarantee that somewhere behind it is a huddle of lucky ten-year-olds wearing headphones, listening in to the scene, their eyes glued



WHEN THE DOCTOR MET...

MARCO POLO AND KUBLAI KHAN

The first Doctor (William Hartnell) had a penchant for the past, meeting Nero, Robespierre, Richard the Lionheart and Billy the Kid. For starters, in 1964, he joined Venetian merchant Marco Polo (Mark Eden) on an arduous trek across 13th-century Cathay to an audience with Kublai Khan (Martin Miller) – only to find the fearsome Mongol leader was a decrepit old man crippled with gout.



DA VINCI AND MONA LISA

In the 1970s, the Time Lord was always namedropping. Jon Pertwee's Doctor counted Napoleon, Raleigh, Houdini and Nelson among his personal pals. In a Douglas Adams script, Tom Baker's Doctor popped round to Leonardo Da Vinci's studio, calling out, "You remember the Mona Lisa? That dreadful woman with no eyebrows who wouldn't sit still?" – but none of these historical figures actually appeared on screen.



CHARLES DICKENS

In 2005, showrunner Russell T Davies got the ball rolling with what he termed the "celebrity historical". He told *RT*: "It's almost like the *Horrible History* take on historical travel. Shove a famous person in there. One you'll recognise at the drop of a hat." Thus Christopher Eccleston's Doctor met Dickens (Simon Callow), raving: "Can I call you Charles? I'm such a big fan... Number one fan, that's me."



MADAME DE POMPADOUR

In a more romantic vein, David Tennant's Doctor kept meeting French aristocrat Madame de Pompadour (Sophia Miles) throughout her life and fell in love. Steven Moffat, who wrote that 2006 episode, told *RT*: "The Doctor's asexual nature was perhaps read into the series by its more asexual fans. If you look at the old show, it's not true."

VINCENT VAN GOGH

Matt Smith's Doctor brushed with the troubled artist Vincent van Gogh (Tony Curran). "He's the most extreme example of someone who got no recognition in his life," writer Richard Curtis told *RT* in 2010. In a tear-jerking moment, van Gogh visited the present and saw his work properly venerated. **PATRICK MULKERN**

travel Gino D'Acampo – see p150