



Terry, pictured with Montmorency Montgomery Bear, a 1936 Merrythought bear that he's had since childhood.

TUCKER'S LUCK

Simon Stabler speaks to Archers and Doctor Who actor Terry Molloy

Like many actors, the theatre is in Terry Molloy's blood and, had his mother not got to hospital on time, could have been on his birth certificate too.

"My mother's waters broke in the toilet of the Theatre Royal in Bath," The Archers and Doctor Who star tells me. "She was visiting her twin sister who was appearing in panto, so I arrived eight weeks premature as the result of her nine-hour coach journey from Newcastle."

Back in the 1920s, Terry's mother, Eileen, and her twin sister, Eve, were in a double act called the Harvey Twins, and, with elder sister Sheila, they toured the variety circuit. Terry, who grew up listening to radio classics such as The Goon Show, Journey Into Space and Dick Barton, the series that lost out to The Archers in the schedules, enjoyed acting at school and was a regular recipient of the poetry recitation prize. However, his career could have taken a different turn.

"My father was a wing commander in the RAF, he'd come up through the ranks

and through the war and he was a sort of self-educated, self-made man really in that respect and he wanted me to be a professional person.

"I liked veterinary, my uncle was a vet and I spent a summer with him in his practice just on the outskirts of Oldham, watching him at work and helping out in whatever small way I could. That was my intention, and then I got my O-level results and I didn't have one single science subject. It took me three goes to get maths.

"So that went straight out the window, then when I left school, I decided to go to Liverpool to study music and drama because music had also been a big part of my life growing up. I'd picked up the clarinet at about age 12, I'd gone through bugle and piano and cello and hated them and then the clarinet suddenly clicked. I think it was around the time that Acker Bilk had brought out Stranger on the Shore and I could play that easily."

Having joined the T-Bunkum Band, "a ten-piece soul band that could basically cover everything that was on the record

from Otis Redding to Aretha Franklin", Terry spent very little time at college, and instead gigged his way around Liverpool for three years, playing at the city's best-known venues including The Cavern Club.

"By the time I got there, which was about 65, the Beatles had been and gone but it was a lively place to be in the 60s.

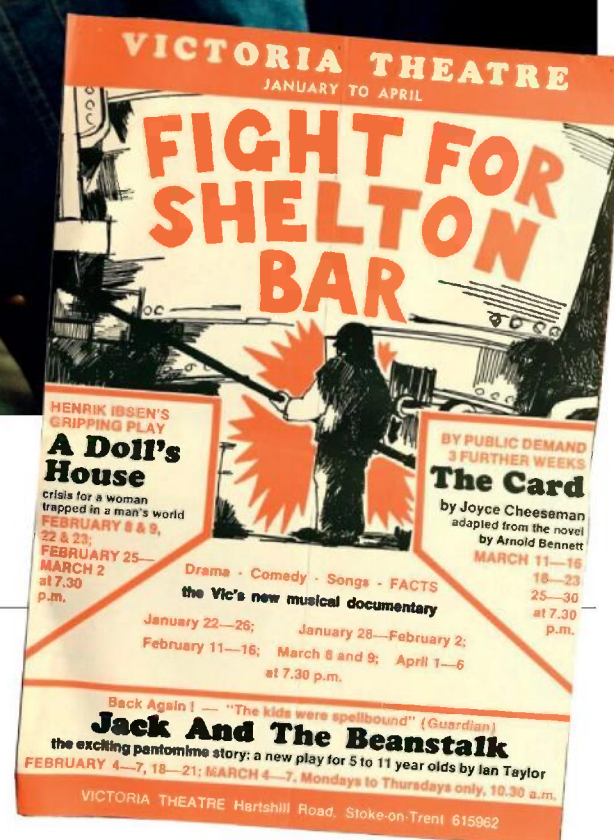
"Towards the end of it, I was beginning to arrange, because we had a four-piece brass section. Then we started to think about going pro and all the arguments started about who was going to have what and what was going to happen and I thought: 'No, I just enjoy doing this for the crack'. For me it's a good place, now I'm off and doing something else. But music has featured throughout my career in various stage productions and things like that."

Leaving Liverpool, Terry joined Theatre Centre, the innovative children's theatre company founded by Brian Way and Margaret Faulkes, before heading to Stoke-on-Trent and the Victoria Theatre.

"It was my first intro into rep and



Pictured in the foreground with Jasper Carrott and Bernard Latham in London Weekend Television's semi-improvised TV movie *Carrott Del Sol*. Inset: Working with Peter Cheesman at the Victoria Theatre, Stoke-on-Trent gave Terry an introduction to rep.



a great place to be. I mean, Peter Cheesman was still running it. Cheesman was one of those people like Joan Littlewood, a lot of his drama would be documentary drama which would be primary source material, so we did documentaries about "the Knotty", the North Staffordshire Railway; about the fight for Shelton Bar, the steel mills; and a thing called Hands Up – For You the War Is Ended! which was basically the story of our newsagent across the road from the theatre.

"Peter Terson was writer in residence there. It was a great grounding for an actor to be in all that, and it really informed my way of working."

In 1977, Terry was part of the UK tour of *Godspell*, "a cracking show" that was occasionally joined by its West End cast members Jeremy Irons and Anthony Head. "It got packed houses everywhere we went, apart from in Newcastle because they put us into the university theatre that had been dark for six months and they put us in on the week of the Jubilee, and they wondered why nobody turned up. "But the rest of the time was fantastic and we had a great company, everyone really got on well."

During the tour, Terry built up

his reputation as a voiceover artist by recording introductions for local radio stations but was already being seen as a rising star at the BBC, where, in 1973, he joined *The Archers*.

"I started doing radio drama down in Pebble Mill and I suddenly got a call from *The Archers*' office asking if I'd like to audition for this character called Mike Tucker. They said I'd been recommended by Tony Cornish (then head of radio drama in the Midlands, "a lovely man").

So I went in and met Tony Shryane the producer, and Edgar Harrison who played Dan, and Gwen Berryman who played Doris, and I was given the script to read and went into the studio, recorded it with them and, of course, I suddenly realised that these two iconic *Archers* voices were next to me at the microphone.

"They kept saying: 'Can you just do that a bit lower... a bit slower' or whatever it was, at the end of which, they came out and said: 'Yeah, that's fine, lovely, we'd like you to start on Monday. Your fee will be seven guineas per episode.' The BBC still paid in guineas in those days.

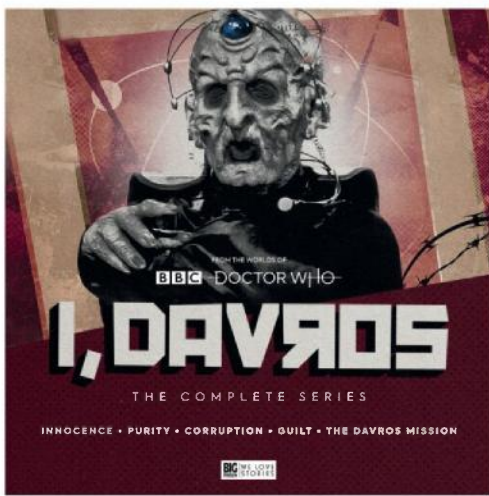
"I only discovered later that in fact somebody else had been cast as Mike Tucker. A friend of mine had done about two episodes and then had gone off to

join the radio rep so he wasn't going to be available, so they thought rather than trying to work around him they'll just recast it and get someone to match the voice as closely as they could.

"I was supposedly in it for five weeks and then nearly 50 years later, I'm still ostensibly in it, although I've not been in it since about 2014/15, because the then editor, Sean O'Connor, decided he didn't like the idea of a child with Down's syndrome in the programme, so he moved the whole family, all the Tuckers, out to Birmingham. You're in that limbo land that you kind of still exist in the ether as a person but you're never on the radio and rarely talked about."

Learning his craft on *The Archers*, as well as other radio dramas produced in Birmingham, Terry received the 1981 Pye Radio Award for best actor for the play *Risky City*. In 1992, *Guernica*, a BBC Radio 3 play in which Terry played Pablo Picasso, won gold at the New York Festivals Radio Awards.

"They actually got me to paint



Terry's portrayal of Davros, creator of the Daleks from Doctor Who, continues in a series of audio adventures for Big Finish Productions. Right: At the Big Finish studios with Isla Blair who plays Davros's wife Charn.

Guernica in the studio, so the physicality was right with the drama as well. I think by the end, I'd done quite a fair copy considering I'm a rubbish artist. I mean, Mark Decker who was the studio manager said: 'Can I have that?' and he took it away, he obviously thought it was something, if only to throw darts at."

Early television work included the BBC children's drama God's Wonderful Railway, the Jasper Carrott TV movie Carrott Del Sol, Beadle's About, and Radio Phoenix, in which Terry played DJ Mike Parker "a pain in the bottom".

It was during the filming of Radio Phoenix that Terry met director Matthew Robinson, who would later cast him in the role of Davros, creator of the Daleks in the 1984 Doctor Who story Resurrection of the Daleks.

"It was like an audio performance on telly because the mask was very immobile, so everything had to come through the voice.

"I became more and more aware of that as we got into the production, doing it, then to wear the mask which actually informs the way you speak and the attitude you have inside that mask, which is not the comfiest of things."

Terry twice returned to Doctor Who the following year; first as undercover policeman Russell in the Robinson directed Attack of the Cybermen, and again as Davros in Revelation of the Daleks. He would have one last television stint as Davros in 1988's Remembrance of the Daleks but has continued to play the character on stage in The Trial of Davros, and in a series of audio plays for Big Finish Productions, often playing opposite this magazine's Colin Baker.

"I always say that the thing about Davros isn't the bangs and whistles, and the explosions and the exterminations. It's his relationship with the Doctor, which is like an intellectual chess game that they play constantly with each other.

“ Playing Davros was like an audio performance on telly because the mask was very immobile. ”


"They're both alone, they have the same level of intellect and they kind of need each other to prove that they're around in an odd sort of way."

A regular at Doctor Who and comic conventions, where he is known to entertain on the ukulele, Terry is often accompanied by Montmorency

Montgomery Bear, a restored 1936 Merrythought bear that he's had since he was born.

"When I went to conventions in the US or Australia or wherever it may be, he began to get quite a following. It was Colin who suggested I should write something because he's got some friends who are publishers who have done a couple of his books and he said: 'I'm sure they'll want to do it'.

"I started to write this thing and it just didn't work at all, and then one morning I just woke up with this phrase in my head and that was it, the kick off, and it fell out in five or six days as a poem, a big long poem.

"I'm trying to write a sequel but haven't quite got the hook of it yet but then my name is TP Molloy, Terrence Patrick Molloy, the P stands for 'procrastination' and I'm sure most writers know that or have experienced that." 

Montmorency Montgomery Bear: The Bear with the Ginormous Heart by Terry Molloy is published by FBS (www.fbs-publishing.co.uk).

For further information on Big Finish Productions and its audio plays set in the worlds of Doctor Who, Sherlock Holmes, Blake's 7, The Avengers, The Prisoner and more, visit www.bigfinish.com

Ambridge Extra

"In the early 90s, Hedli Niklaus, who plays Kathy, and I came up with the idea of setting up a club for The Archers to be called Archers Addicts. I went along and put this proposal to the BBC, we gained a licence to run it as a limited company with the cast as shareholders. It provided work for the cast as well by doing outside events and agricultural shows and things like that. Eventually, we used to do a lot of cruises with Fred Olsen as sort of added value to their arts cruise, you know, a couple or three characters on board with a director and a sound engineer, and spend the time when we're on board showing people how the programme's put together, and involving them in it as well.

"The fact that the Dick Barton writers put The Archers together finally killed Dick, much to the chagrin of the people who liked Dick Barton. I have to say that we made some slight recompense because a couple of years ago (2013), Tim Bentinck who plays David Archer and I recorded a live Dick Barton episode in a theatre in Leicester. He played Dick and I played Snowy, so we tried to square the circle a bit but it's not the same, I liked Dick Barton as well, it was good fun."

