

Steve O'Brien uncovers the strange truth about the second Doctor's secret life...

The double life of Doctor Who



When Patrick Troughton took over from William Hartnell on Doctor Who on the evening of October 29, 1966 he was lucky that the British tabloid press weren't quite as scandal-hungry as they would become. For the freshly installed star of this jewel of the Saturday schedule had a secret that, had the red-tops ever sniffed it out, would have caused considerable embarrassment to the BBC.

On the face of it, the then-46-year-old Patrick Troughton lived a perfectly respectable life. He'd served in the Royal Navy during the Second World War, even winning an Atlantic Star. He'd made his big-screen debut in Laurence Olivier's Hamlet in 1948 and, in 1953, became the first actor to play Robin Hood on TV. By this time, he'd been married eight years, having wed Margaret Dunlop on September 3, 1943. Their first child, Joanna, arrived in 1947, followed by David in 1950 and Michael in 1955. But shortly after Michael's birth Troughton walked out of the family home to move in with a new woman, Ethel 'Bunny' Nuens. From here on, Troughton would effectively run two families.

FAMILY SECRETS

While both Margaret and Ethel were aware of the others' existence, a fiction was created for the benefit of Troughton's mother. Every Christmas and Easter, Patrick, Margaret and the children would go round to her house and essentially play happy families. Troughton's mother never knew about Ethel and of the three further children – Jane, Peter and Mark – that he'd fathered with his mistress. Mrs Troughton remained blissfully unaware of the truth of his son's secret brood, up until her death in 1979.

"We were told not to mention anything about Bunny or the other children," recalled Michael, years later.

There's a piece of dialogue in Patrick Troughton's first Doctor Who story where, after the character of Polly asks the Doctor why he's changed appearance he replies: "Life depends on change and renewal." The line could have almost come from ➤

Troughton himself. When Michael asked his father why he had left his family, Patrick simply said, "Things have to change all the time for me I'm afraid, that's the way I'm made," adding, "I am sorry if I hurt you."

During this time, he still saw his first-born sons and daughter, often popping round to their house in Mill Hill, north London. But most of his time was spent with Ethel and their three children at their bungalow in Kew. "That's disgusting," said one of Troughton's Mill Hill neighbours when they found out about his double life. "Why on earth would anyone choose to live in south London?"

ADDICTED TO WOMEN

That balancing of two families came at a huge financial cost, however. The Doctor Who filming schedule was punishing, and Troughton seriously considered packing it in at the beginning of 1968, but he couldn't afford to. It was a regular pay packet and he had two families to support, not to mention three children attending pricey private schools. "He needed at least another year of financial stability to even consider leaving Doctor Who for the insecure world of freelance television acting," Michael told Doctor Who Magazine in 2011.

For Troughton, women were a constant weakness. Michael, in his biography of his father, describes Patrick's tacticity toward the female sex as "an addiction that would cause all sorts of personal problems throughout his life". During this time, he had an affair with the actress Ann Morrish and there were rumours of other flings.

"I think he only gave one interview during his time on Doctor Who," recalled Frazer Hines, who played companion Jamie McCrimmon, "to a lovely female reporter from some newspaper, because he quite fancied her. He had an eye for the ladies, and she quite melted him."

Patrick Troughton in 1981 (right) and with Frazer Hines (below), who played Jamie in Doctor Who.



Hines went on to remember how he and Troughton would play golf together, after which Patrick would give his co-star a lift home.

"We'd go to three different houses on the way," Hines recalled. "He'd knock on the door, give this woman some money and then we'd drive off."

Patrick Troughton's importance in the story of Doctor Who can't be underestimated. The series had enjoyed three successful years with William Hartnell at the helm, but its star's failing health (later to be diagnosed as arteriosclerosis) necessitated a change at the top. Troughton's genius was in not attempting to replicate Hartnell's often grouchy interpretation, instead coming up with his own distinct take. After toying with various looks and approaches (try-outs included an old windjammer captain, an eye-patch-wearing pirate, a mad scientist-type with spiky black hair and even a turban-headed character inspired by *The Arabian Nights*) he decided on something warmer and more twinkly eyed, essentially establishing the

character of the Doctor for every actor that followed.

Troughton did eventually depart Doctor Who in June 1969, depressed about how he thought the series was "sinking into a downward spiral". Despite his worry that he'd be thought of as the man who killed Doctor Who, it continued with Jon Pertwee in the role, and, three years after he left, Troughton returned, alongside a desperately ill William Hartnell, for a guest spot in the 10th anniversary story *The Three Doctors*.

Three years after that appearance he left Ethel and married for the second time, to Shelagh Holdup, inheriting two stepchildren.

Patrick Troughton died in 1987, at a sci-fi convention in Columbus, Georgia, from a heart attack. Though he got on well with his two first-born sons, his relationship with Joanna, who vowed never to speak to him again after he left her mother, was never resolved.

The actor's double life only became public knowledge when his son Michael published a biography of his father in 2011. But it's not the full story and, despite Michael's book, it's unlikely we'll ever be able to comprehend the full picture of who Patrick Troughton was. "He was a private man," recalled Frazer Hines. "I don't think anybody knew the real Patrick."

Troughton once claimed his favourite role was playing Daniel Quilp in the BBC's adaptation of *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1962). Like much TV from the era, not a single episode exists today.

DID YOU KNOW?



Patrick Troughton's Doctor Who became very attached to the recorder he found after being regenerated.