



No Ordinary Joe

Simon Stabler speaks to Emmerdale and Doctor Who star Frazer Hines

Although best known for playing Doctor Who companion Jamie McCrimmon in the late 1960s, and Emmerdale's Joe Sugden from 1972-94, Frazer Hines has been entertaining audiences since the early 50s.

"We were living in Harrogate and I used to go to the Marjorie Newbury School of Dancing," recalls the Horsforth-born actor. "I was seven years old and I had to do an impression of Maurice Chevalier singing Louise. We weren't a rich family, so my mother got this potato sacking, made a suit and dyed it white. I can't stand anything itchy on my knees, I could never have been in the army, so when I got to the tap dance, my legs were a little stiff.

"The local newspaper said: 'Seven-year-old stops show. He even had the Maurice Chevalier Walk'.

"Somebody at Corona Stage School, how they saw it, I don't know, rang my mother and said: 'We'd like Frazer to join us.' My mother said: 'He's too young, we'll wait until he's 10.' And when I was 10 years old, my mother rang Corona, spoke to the

principal Rona Knight, a lovely lady, and I went to Corona.

"I always say that it was a very good year to be there, because there was Richard O'Sullivan, Dennis Waterman, Susan George, Jeremy Bulloch and Francesca Annis.

“ Jamie’s taken me to New Zealand, Australia, America, Sheffield, he’s taken me all over the world. ”

"Corona was good because you got the three Rs in the morning, and then in the afternoon, whatever house you were in you got play reading, ballet and tap, we learnt everything. The teachers were all excellent, although all of us boys hated ballet."

Shortly after joining Corona, Frazer appeared in his first film, as an extra in the crowd in John & Julie, a comedy set in the week leading up to the Queen's coronation, which was recently shown on Talking Pictures TV as part of the channel's

platinum jubilee celebrations.

"I was the 480th citizen," he jokes, "in fact, I recorded it to freeze-frame to try and spot my school cap."

Further films followed including Children's Film Foundation productions ("They were great grounding films, so when you came to do a first feature for the cinema, you had no qualms"), the sci-fi horror X the Unknown, and thriller The Weapon. The latter film, directed by Val Guest concerns a young boy, Erik, who goes on the run after accidentally shooting his friend with a gun they found while playing in a derelict building. Playing Erik's mother was Lizabeth Scott, a "beautiful blonde, I think that's why I have a penchant for blondes.

"We were rehearsing this scene, where a pal and I go to Erik's house to see if we can find his school cap with our dog to sniff out where he's hiding. Lizabeth Scott was wearing this raincoat inside the house, which I thought was strange, but never mind. Val Guest said: 'Let's go for a take.' Lizabeth Scott took her raincoat off, she had a pink bra, pink slip and pink pants. My pal and I stood open-mouthed.

"After what seemed like an hour, she

Opposite: Frazer as Joe Sugden with Sheila Mercier as mother Annie in an early episode of Emmerdale Farm. Right: Winning a few races as an amateur jockey in the 1970s, Frazer has owned shares in several brood mares, including the late Excavator Lady, who bred many winners.

turned to Val and said: 'I think we'd better go for a take before these little boys grow into men.' She then put the dress on and it transpired that she didn't want our dog to jump up and mess the dress up before the take. She wore the raincoat so the dog could get used to her, but I always remember that."

In 1957, the year he appeared in the Charlie Chaplin film *A King in New York*, Frazer was cast as Napoleon, one of the "Gorbals Die-Hards", in the BBC television adaptation of *Huntingtower*, and as Jan in the wartime adventure *The Silver Sword*. Both serials were produced by Shaun Sutton, a man "I owe my career to".

By 1966, Sutton was head of serials for the BBC and recommended Frazer to Doctor Who producer Innes Lloyd. Although he didn't get the part of Able Seaman Ben Jackson, a companion to William Hartnell's Doctor, he was called back a few months later to play Jacobite Jamie McCrimmon in Patrick Troughton's second story, *The Highlanders*.

"I saw Innes Lloyd, had a cup of tea. He said: 'Shaun tells me that you can do a Scottish accent?'. 'Yes, because my mother's Scottish.' 'And you're free next month, OK...?' I didn't read, didn't audition, didn't act. I went home and my agent rang me up: 'Oh yes, you've got to go for a wardrobe fitting' and that was it."



Although only intended as a one-off part, Frazer's performance impressed Lloyd and the programme's script editor Gerry Davis so much, that Jamie was kept on as a companion.

"When Innes came to me after episode two of *The Highlanders* had gone out, he said 'How do you fancy joining the old Tardis crew for a year?' I said: 'I can't Innes.' 'Why?' 'Because I've already filmed a scene where I'm waving goodbye to the Tardis.' 'Oh to hell with all that, we'll go back.'"

Instead of staying for a year, Frazer remained on the show for three, leaving at the end of Patrick Troughton's final regular story, 1969's *The War Games*. One of the most enjoyable times of his working life, Frazer worked well with Troughton and fellow companions Deborah Watling and, later, Wendy Padbury.

"On days off, if we ever had a day off, Patrick and I would play golf. Because we all got on so well together, which is good, we never went to work thinking: 'I hope she's in a good mood' or 'I hope he hasn't had a row with his wife' it was a joy to go into work, it really was."

The next chapter in Frazer's professional life was again the result of having worked for producer Shaun Sutton in the 1950s.

"David Goddard was the assistant on most of the jobs I did for Shaun, *Huntingtower* and the *Silver Sword*. Then he went off to Australia to do *Skippy the Bush Kangaroo*. I think I was doing *War Games*, and I saw this lovely blonde walking down the corridor, it was [his daughter] Liza Goddard. We used to play together when we were 12 years old.



Above: Frazer has fond memories of rehearsing this scene with Lizabeth Scott for the 1956 thriller *The Weapon*. Right: The big names that Frazer has worked with include Charlie Chaplin in the 1957 film *A King in New York*.

"I took her out to supper and then we went out for about three years and then we split up but we still remained friends, so much so, that I stayed at David's house in Farnham. I said: 'David, what are you doing?'. 'I'm casting and producing Emmerdale Farm. I've got the mother and the other son but I haven't got the youngest son and it's set in Yorkshire'.

"And Liza said: 'Daddy, Frazer's from Yorkshire, he's a good actor if you don't give him the part, Mummy and I will leave home.' So, I got it."

Playing the part of famer Joe Sugden, Frazer got his hands dirty, quickly learning to dip sheep and milk cows. However, he was already an experienced horseman.

"I used to play a lot of charity football and Tommy Steele's brother Roy Hicks said: 'Come and ride out at Scobie Breasley's with me,' so I started to ride out with him at Epsom. Then, when I did Emmerdale, I bought a *Horses in Training* book in Harrogate and this little man, trainer Steve Nesbitt, came up to me: 'Hello, young man, we've been watching you on Emmerdale Farm, why have you got *Horses in Training*?'. 'Well, I'm just seeing if any of the old horses I used to ride are in there'.

"'Come and ride for me,' he said, and I rode out for him one morning. The horse was called Wee-Game and it ran off on me. I was turning him in a circle, and turning him in a circle, in the end the horse fell over because I was turning him in a circle to stop him. Steve ran over: 'Are you OK?'. 'Yes, let me up and I'll ride him home'.

"So, I rode him home and Steve said: 'You'll do for me, because a lot of people would go: "No, don't put me on a horse again", and he got me my jockey's licence. I won two races, placed a lot of times but in those days, to be an amateur, you had to put on your form what you did for a living. A lot of trainers' sons and trainers' secretaries were almost like professional jockeys, they were riding three lots a day, seven days a week, I'm riding one lot a week because I've got rehearsals to go to or whatever. So, I was lucky to ride a couple of winners."

Frazer, who played a lot of football and cricket ("I love my cricket, I wasn't half bad as a spin-bowler, I took a lot of first-class wickets.") has had shares in several brood mares at Newmarket, which have been responsible for many winners including one called Joe Sugden.

"We had two Joe Sugdens, one when I was in Emmerdale and we sold him on, and then when I left Emmerdale, we got another one called Joe Sugden. He was a big horse, we couldn't ride him as a two-year-old because he was far too big.



While appearing in a play in Cardiff, Frazer visited Peter Capaldi on the set of *Doctor Who* where he received a round of applause from the crew for his contribution to the show.

Eventually Jinx, who was my business partner, rang me and said: 'He's running on Friday night at Newmarket, come down and see him'.

“ I wasn't going to do *Duty Free* but thought: 'If Richard Burton can take the micky out of himself, so can I.' ”

"There were eight runners, he was 80 to 1, and Jinx said: 'I've got a fiver each way.' 'You never gamble.' 'Well, it's his first run ever.' 'Oh, I'll have a fiver each way then,' and he won, at 80 to 1. What gave me more pleasure was that three individual ladies came up to me and each said: 'I saw you were here, I thought: "Oh, he must be trying" and I had a fiver each way'.

"A fiver each way, 80 to 1, 400 quid, that's, I don't know, three weeks' pension. I was so pleased because if I hadn't been there, they wouldn't have backed a horse."

In 1983, with his then wife Gemma Craven working in the West End and Frazer up in Yorkshire filming Emmerdale Farm, he decided to leave the show in order for them to spend more time together. The marriage wasn't to last but

the invitation to appear as himself in the Yorkshire Television sitcom *Duty Free* was to prove the tonic he needed.

"They were lovely ladies," says Frazer recalling his co-stars Gwen Taylor and Joanna Van Gyseghem, "I was going through a very messy divorce at the time so they rescued me. I wasn't going to do it when my agent asked me: 'I can't take the micky out of myself'. But then I was up in Scotland at the Pitlochry Festival Theatre and, in the afternoon, I was watching an episode of *I Love Lucy*. Richard Burton was in it, and I thought: 'If he can take the micky out of himself, then so can I.'"

His Emmerdale Farm commitments meant that Frazer could only make a brief appearance in the *Doctor Who* 20th anniversary story, 1983's *The Five Doctors*.

"I should have been in all of *The Five Doctors* but Emmerdale wouldn't release me. So, producer John Nathan-Turner (JNT) rang me: 'I want you in it, if you get any days off, ring me'. And I called him back: 'I've got Wednesday and Thursday off'. 'Right, I'll send you a fax,' that's how long ago it was. That night, there was this fax, I looked at it, it was just three lines. 'Oh really? Two days off, I could go to the races.' Then I thought: 'No, I want to see Patrick. I want to see Wendy.' So I went down there, and the three of us had a marvellous time. I did the show and when



Frazer and his Doctor who co-star Wendy Padbury continue to work together on a series of audio stories for Big Finish Productions. Below: Originally booked to appear in one Doctor Who story, Frazer played Jamie McCrimmon, companion to Patrick Troughton's Doctor, for three years.

well loved, I'm quite fortunate that he was loved by a load of people."

Like many soaps, today's Emmerdale, as the show has been known since 1989, regularly features stunts and other dramatic storylines, a world away from the "sleepy" image of the then Emmerdale Farm which originally went out at lunchtimes.

"You say that but in episode 30, Sharon Crossthwaite was murdered," points out Frazer. The unfortunate Sharon was played by fellow Doctor Who star Louise Jameson who recently returned to Emmerdale as another character, Mary Goskirk.

"She must hold the record for the longest gap between appearances. She's very good at it."

Frazer left Emmerdale for the final time

I was getting derigged, JNT said: 'You and Patrick could have been in a prop cupboard for 14 years, do you want to do some more?' 'Yep.' 'Right, leave it with me' and that's how we got to do The Two Doctors."

Part of Colin Baker's first full season of Doctor Who, 1985's The Two Doctors swapped the usual quarry location for Seville, which must have been a treat?

"In one way that was good news but we were supposed to go to New Orleans but the American money pulled out at the last minute. Still, at least we got away."

Although the story reunited Frazer with Patrick Troughton, he spent most of it partnered with the current Tardis crew of Colin Baker and Nicola Bryant, a line-up that Frazer feels could have become a more permanent arrangement.

"I was kicking myself because Colin and I got on well, and Nicola as well, and just before The Two Doctors, I got a phone call from Sheila Mercier, Emmerdale's Annie: 'You're not having a lot of luck,' because I was going through this divorce, my mother had died, 'why don't you come back to your other family?'"

"So, I rang the producer, told them what Sheila had suggested. 'Yes, when can you come back?' I told them I was doing The Two Doctors, then a pantomime, so I'm not free until February, 'Perfect, that gives me three months to get a storyline.'

"But I'm sure if I said to JNT: 'Look, you haven't got a male companion, why doesn't Patrick take off and leave me behind and I go off with Colin?'. And I'm sure he would have gone: 'YES!!'"

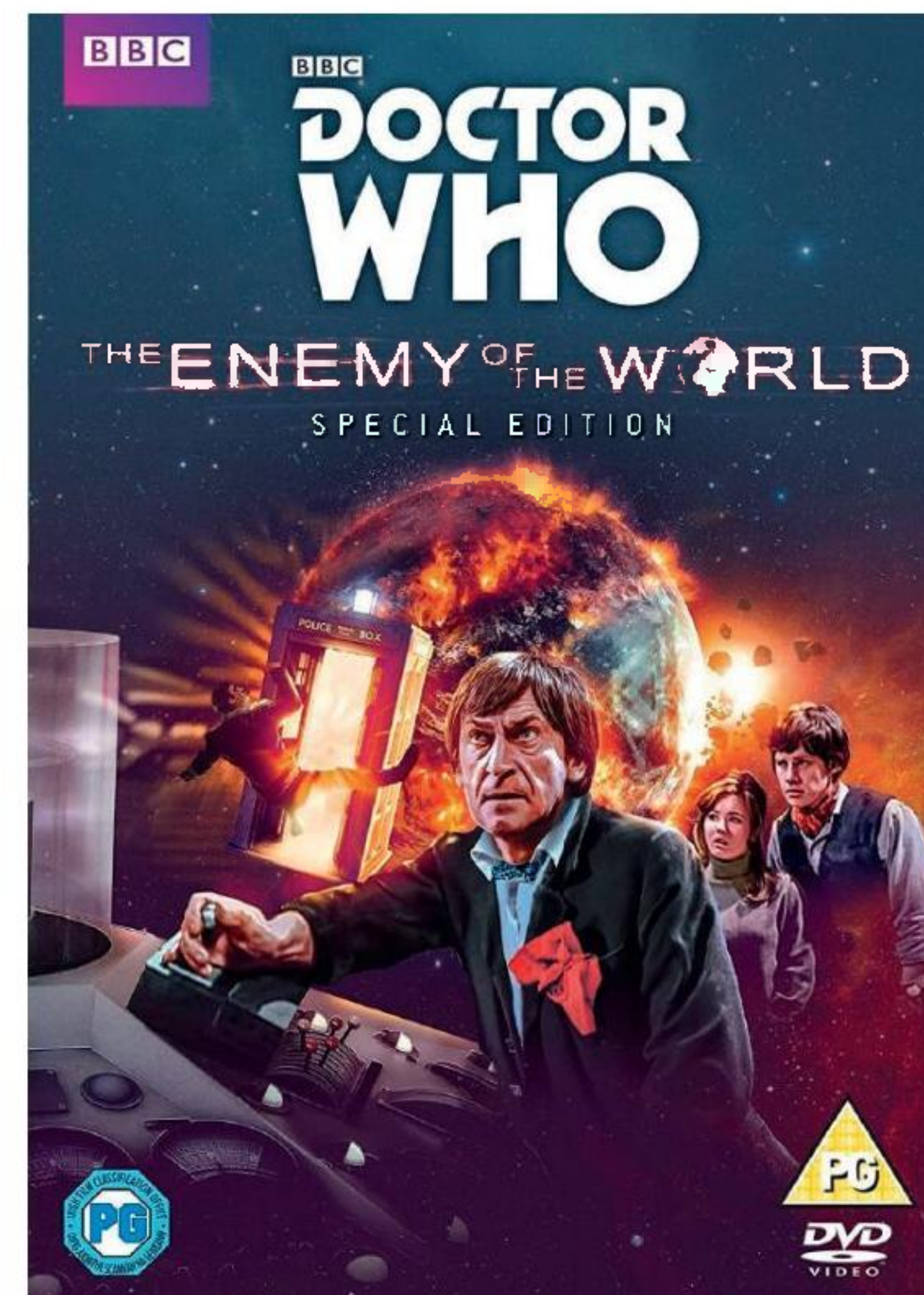
Although he still watches Doctor

Who occasionally, and liked Jodie Whittaker's debut story, The Woman Who Fell to Earth, it's Peter Capaldi who Frazer considers the best "of the new ones because he was older, he had gravitas."

"I was doing a play in Cardiff when Peter Capaldi was the incumbent Doctor, and I got a message at the stage door: 'Peter Capaldi would like to see you tomorrow on the set. I got to the set, we had a little chat and we got these pictures taken. And then after he filmed a scene, he pointed at me: 'If it wasn't for him and his Doctor, we wouldn't be here today.' And the crew all gave me a round of applause. He was so magnanimous."

For a part that was meant to be for just four episodes back in 1966, the role of Jamie has been a job for life for Frazer. Not only does he continue to play Jamie in a series of Doctor Who audio stories for Big Finish Productions, where he also performs an accurate impersonation of Patrick Troughton's Doctor, he's a regular on the convention circuit.

"Jamie's taken me to New Zealand, Australia, America, Sheffield, he's taken me all over the world. Luckily his character is



in 1994. And although he offered to come back for the funerals of any major characters ("I said: 'Whatever I'm doing, call me and I'll endeavour to get back because I ought to be there,'"), the producer at the time had other ideas.

"I thought everything was fine. And then they rang up saying they were going to kill him off. I think I upset the producer because I said: 'You won't be the producer forever, a new producer might come

along and want me back,' and he wasn't the producer forever."

However, in the world of soap, death isn't always the end. There have been several soap characters who have been resurrected over the years, despite their on-screen deaths. So, Joe Sugden's off-screen demise could quite easily be rewritten as a case of mistaken identity. It would certainly be a dramatic way to mark Emmerdale's 50th anniversary in October.

"People say: 'Would you want to go back, Frazer?'. Yeah, I'd go back. Perhaps it's not too late for a phone call: 'How do you fancy coming out of the shower or something?'" 🇬🇧

Classic episodes of Emmerdale and Doctor Who are available to stream on BritBox.