A Time for Clichés

We stand (or more likely, sit) at the start of a new age. To much fangirl jubilation, David Tennant has become the tenth regeneration of the Doctor and is contractually obliged to make more than one season. His performance has been absolutely fantastic. He combines all the quirkiness of Tom Baker with the deep emotional struggles the later Doctors should have had. And, the horror is back with children most firmly behind couches hiding from Cybermen, werewolves, robots, and more Cybermen. May the good times roll.

A new era also dawns upon our society as there are changes to the committee. Rebecca Logan, who created our covers, takes over from Sebastian as President. Also, I take over as Secretary. Lastly, our weekly meetings will be herein held on Tuesdays, so keep an eye on the website, users.ox.ac.uk/~whosoc, for details. All apologies to TrekSoc members.

So, this issue: not only does it contain five Daleks and a big gun, but an extended summary of the talk Terrance Dicks gave last term on page 7 for anyone who couldn’t make it. All of you that didn’t bother to come to Cardiff can find out what you missed on page 17, and James Chapman’s talk to the History Society is recorded for posterity by Matthew Kilburn on page 21. Alex Cameron continues to provide excellent fiction for the magazine with “The Gods Do Weep” on page 25, and on page 11 Daniel Saunders provides an insight into the social aspects of Doctor Who.

Now, once you’ve finished enjoying all this lovely literature, why not pick up a pen (or keyboard) and write your own piece? I’ll accept any submissions of virtually any form to adam.povey@sic.ox.ac.uk. Without your submissions, I can’t make the next issue, so the faster you write, the faster you get that feeling of fulfilment from reading Tides again.

Share and enjoy,
Adam Povey
This is just a theory, but all this might just have been Karen’s fault.

It was 1973. I was born eleven months into the 1970s, but Karen was about eighteen. She was my next-door neighbour, in an adjoining semi to ours in Low Fell, a suburb of Gateshead. I remember comparing my paintbox with hers. I had a little tray of perhaps six or eight colours. Karen had a box of watercolours for college, perhaps with twenty-four or thirty-six shades. I lived life in black and white and not even all the primary colours; Karen was grown-up and could see all the varieties of the spectrum. I enthused about my favourite television programme, *The Magic Roundabout*, arranging my figures (I must have had a full set of the characters, including the train, and had its track as well, in a cheery post office red) and making up stories of Ermintrude and Mr Rusty and Zebedee and Brian and Florence and Dougal. Karen played me Beatles records; we would watch *Blue Peter* — the era of Val, John, Pete and Lesley — and perhaps Karen reminisced about Christopher Trace. Or perhaps that’s my imagination. She certainly played Beatles records.

I’m fairly certain that we watched *Doctor Who* together.
sometimes. When we met up again, in 1989, Karen remembered my obsession with *The Magic Roundabout*, but not *Doctor Who*. Yet I’m sure that I remember Linx lifting his helmet from his head at the end of part one of ‘The Time Warrior’ on first transmission, which might have been at Karen’s house, and I’m sure that I saw the sequence in which the Daleks undertake target practice on a model TARDIS in ‘Death to the Daleks’ there. We also saw ‘The Monster of Peladon’ Part One – we missed the credits and thought that Alpha Centauri was a sort of Dalek. The title sequence would have caught my imagination anyway, but an added attraction was that when crossing on the High Level Bridge from Gateshead to Newcastle and back, I could pretend that I was going down the tunnel from the start of the 1973/74 sequence, because the roadway was enclosed under the railway line on the upper deck and lit with rows of bar lights.

I’m not sure if I watched any of ‘Planet of the Spiders’ on its first transmission, but I did see the 27 December compilation repeat. By this time we’d moved to Nottingham but were staying at my grandparents’ in Co. Durham for Christmas. I was taken by the chanting of the residents of the retreat, and remember my Auntie Ann complimenting me on my repetition of Om Mani Padme Hum. I didn’t notice any spiders appearing, except on screen. The next day, I think at my other grandparents’ (still in the black and white era, and watching on 405 lines) I saw ‘Robot’, Part One.

There were lots of bewitching things about *Doctor Who* in this period. One of them was that it knew its appeal to a small child lay not only in strange creatures but in its leads being adults who behaved in ways comprehensible to children. The Doctor likes dressing up, we learn in ‘Robot’, and at
times is both the Brigadier’s and Harry’s child but also the parent to all the other cast members. He seems irresponsible and at times appears to need guidance from the more level-headed characters, but revealing his superior knowledge at points of crisis. Sarah is his best friend, and Elisabeth Sladen plays her as a sort of honorary older sister; to Jon Pertwee’s Doctor she was a chick under the wing of Pertwee’s mother hen (as Sladen herself has said), but with the new Doctor she becomes a presence of familiarity and to some extent experience. These cement Sarah’s role as perhaps the best audience identification figure among the companions of the 1970s, at least for me; Lis Sladen’s open, sunny face expressed a child-like inquisitiveness and optimism even in the midst of the darkest terror.

*Doctor Who* stories often concern the manipulation of innocence. ‘Invasion of the Dinosaurs’ is one of the most obvious, with Professor Whitaker and his associates manipulating the goodwill of other members of the technocratic elite to which Whitaker, Sir Charles Grover and General Finch belong, in order to bring destruction on modern society regardless of good or evil; one wonders if the author, Malcolm Hulke, was thinking of his own Marxist idealism and the failure of twentieth-century state communism to achieve an egalitarian workers’ society. Not that I noticed, when I was three.

‘The Monster of Peladon’ is similar as it depicts representatives of a paternalistic power, supposedly the impartial guardians of galactic harmony, turning up to restore order between warring parties but instead only serving their own selfish agenda.

After this cynicism it’s appropriate that season 12, following the regeneration of the Doctor, concerned the triumph of human optimism. Thematically ‘Robot’ belongs with season 11, with its Thinktank of government-funded scientists acting against the interests of humanity; but from then on, the Doctor, Sarah and Harry explored the fate of the human spirit. ‘The Ark in Space’ sees Noah transformed physically into a Wirrm, without his memories of Earth, but it is ‘more than a vestige’ of humanity which at first makes him the Wirrm’s leader, and then provides the basis of their destruction. Styre’s ‘The Sontaran Experiment’ seeks to break down what makes a human being into component parts, reduced into a series of objectives which the Sontaran military can then pick up; he fails because he underestimates that the sum of these parts creates a greater whole, embodied in the superhuman Doctor and bravely too-human Harry and Sarah. ‘Genesis of the Daleks’ makes good use of a monster already established in popular culture as the antithesis of humanity; the Doctor refuses to prevent the creation of the Daleks because
the Daleks will stimulate co-operation between peoples and species who would not otherwise have known of each other, leading to 'great good'. Only 'Revenge of the Cybermen' fits unhappily with this scheme, and even then the Cybermen are reliant upon human tenacity and physical strength in their bid to destroy Voga. 'Terror of the Zygons', originally planned as part of season 12 but postponed to become part of season 13, brutally contrasts the murderous intent of the Zygons, which is sharply accentuated (complete with pitchfork) when they are impersonating natives of Earth, with the good-natured and (often) unsuspecting humans around them.

During 'Genesis of the Daleks' we moved house again, to a different area of Nottingham. Once 'Revenge of the Cybermen' was over – I was more frightened of the Sontarans than any other monster, and was worried that the Cybermen would remove their faceplates to reveal something hideous underneath – I took a purple crayon to the interior of my beloved wardrobe, upon which was emblazoned a picture of Zebedee from The Magic Roundabout, and drew not only the control room of the Doctor’s TARDIS but imagined craft for Sarah and Harry as well. I was probably one of many hundred children who did something like this. The console rooms were entirely of my own creation as the console room never appeared in season 12. These TARDISes were smaller than the Doctor’s – a sign, probably, that the Doctor had become the obvious ‘parent’ to the two companion figures, but also a reflection of the closeness the three regulars had engendered. Even though the adventures of the Doctor, Sarah and Harry were disturbing, the time travellers were somehow especially trustworthy and, looking back, happy and friendly people of the kind you hoped inhabited the outside world and kept it a good place.

Later in 1975 I started school and Doctor Who took a more Gothic turn, but the foundations of the success of the Tom Baker period, at least as far as I was concerned, were laid in the innocent adventuring and optimistic spirit of season 12. This established trust in the new Doctor and underpinned the programme’s good-hearted adventurous spirit for a new era and a new generation of viewers – including me.
Script Crises, Monsters, and Incoherent Crap

Part 1

Adam Povey summarises Terrance Dicks’ talk of 20 February

It all started at Crossroads where Terrance met Derrick Sherwin and both were on the writing team. Derrick later left to become script editor for Doctor Who, but when he wanted to move on, he offered the job to Terrance (most likely after a few other people). Being a freelance writer, Terrance found the idea of three-months employment quite promising and accepted. He commented, "I’ve always thought, ‘There went the next five or six years of my life,’ but in fact, there went the whole of my life.”

However, Derrick never actually got the other job, so Terrance ended up with “a year of training” acting as assistant script editor. These were “last great drunken days of the BBC,” such that the staff spent noon till 3 and onwards in the BBC’s bar.

As such, quite a few scripts fell through, giving Terrance a number of opportunities to get his work produced. ‘The Krotons’ had been submitted, but Terrance alone liked it. He was allowed to work on it as a reserve story to keep him out of the way, he believes. When a script collapsed, Terrance came to the rescue with “a four-part serial he happened to have about his person” and so started the creative careers of Terrance and, in Terrance’s opinion, the greatest writer of Doctor Who, Robert (Bob) Holmes. Sadly, it had possibly the worst monster in Doctor Who ever as all Krotons could do was loom and so loom they did, generally surrounded in dry ice to disguise the fact.
Monsters often caused problems. (Jumping ahead in time) He and Barry Letts learned to check on their progress to ensure the props department didn’t always produce terrifying dragons made of pyjama quilting. In ‘The Monster of Peladon’, a creature described as “a completely alien being” seemed to cause particular problems. The director came to the creative staff to ask if anyone had seen the new monster, Alpha Centauri. Terrance recounted the conversation:

**Director:** Have you seen this new monster?

**Terrance:** No, should we have?

**Director:** Well, it worries me a bit.

**Terrance:** Why?

**Director:** Well, it’s kind of tall and it’s got this column/dome thing on the top and to be perfectly frank it looks like a giant dick.

**Terrance:** Ah.

And, on further inspection, it did look like a rather large phallus. The props department assured them that a cloak would disguise this and all would be fine. A week later, the costume was ready. The director commented, “Well, now it looks like a giant dick with a cloak on it.” Somehow, no one noticed.

(Back with the timeline) Peter Bryant and Derrick Sherwin had never treated Doctor Who seriously and eventually found more ‘worthwhile’ work, but cast John Pertwee as the Doctor before leaving. At the time, this was unexpected as John had only ever been a rather camp character actor. When told to play the Doctor as himself, John exclaimed, “I don’t know. I haven’t got myself!” Just before the change, two whole scripts collapsed, and the staff turned to Terrance with, “We need a 10 part serial, and we want you to write it, and we want it next week.” Thus was ‘The War Games’ born, with the help of Mack Hulke, an old friend and mentor. The beginning and end are reportedly rather good, but ‘loop’ plots were used liberally, being “The Doctor or somebody got captured, then they escaped, then they got chased around, and then locked up again.” This worked into the capture of the Doctor by the Time Lords and the decree of the “ghastly punishment of being turned into John...
Pertwee."
Thus, a few things happened at the same time. John Pertwee became the Doctor, Barry Letts became producer (this wasn't what he wanted to do, but, "Not wanting to be a producer is one of the qualifications for becoming one,"), the show moved to colour, Terrance became full-time script editor, and the show became a fantastic success. They seemed to be making all the right decisions, but those of their predecessors restricted them, such as the exile to Earth. This had been done for financial reasons, as setting the show on Earth meant contemporary props and sets could be used, avoiding the usual requirement that everything be created from scratch for every episode, though the Quatermass serial had given inspiration. Serials moved to seven parts so that the costumes and sets could be spread over more episodes, further reducing costs.

As soon as Barry and Terrance were in a position to change this, they did, but it took time. They had to do their best to work around the two feasible plots the format allowed, "Mad scientist or alien invasion." This bothered Terrance and Barry quite a lot and 'Doctor Who and the Silurians' was an attempt to get around it (the Silurians had always been here, so it didn't count as alien invasion). Eventually, they returned to 6 and 4 parters, which Terrance believes to be the optimal length of an episode, depending on how much story there is to tell. This also pleased the department head, who liked as many episodes as possible to be produced. It may have been tremendously hard work, but Terrance greatly enjoyed his time on Doctor Who. The production process was also made more complicated by having so many stories in production at once.
One story would be with the editor and required cuts (though “You can always cut and it’s always an improvement.”). Next, you get a show actually being filmed and the problems this creates. Another show was in the working stage (1st/2nd drafts), and finally, there was one in the planning stages, requiring his input. He said, “It was like juggling and every now and again they throw you an extra ball just to make it more interesting... It was like running up a down escalator. If you really sprinted, you might get to the top. If you stopped to take a breath, you’d be down at the bottom again... It’s quite a tough job in a way.” The BBC would make it harder by not commissioning a new series until the last minute, so that there was no time to find writers and stories before production began.

Terrance emphasised that the aim in making the show was, “To not to have to show the test card at 6 o’clock on a Saturday night.” A good show was preferable, but only 25 minutes of transmittable programming was required.

After five years, though, the main players of the Pertwee era decided it was time to move on. John was first, wanting to accept some of the many offers he had been receiving. Despite what you might think, this helped him immensely. The lead in a long running program is quite a “poisoned chalice” as everyone wants to hire you, but only while you already have a contract. In fact, Tom Baker had an even harder time after seven years in the roles, only recovering his career recently.

Terrance decided that 5 years was a good run. It was time to move on. He passed the editorship Bob Holmes, who was strangely eager to take on the role and returned to the world of freelance.

Continued on Page 30
Daniel Saunders continues his analysis of the more mundane aspects of Doctor Who

Much of the criticism of the new series has focused on its supposed ‘soap opera’ nature. In the last issue of Tides, I argued that this is based to some extent on a fallacy and that just because a story concentrates on the emotions of the regular characters it is not necessarily trying to be a soap. Instead, I tried to draw the distinction between those stories where the characters respond primarily and directly to the unknown or incredible (the domain of non-mimetic fiction such as science fiction, fantasy and horror) and those which dwell on the mundane and domestic aspects of their life (the subject matter of realistic fiction, including soap opera). I think the new series has largely remained in the first of these two categories, although at times it has drifted into the second, most notably with the ongoing subplot of Rose and Mickey’s relationship. This should not automatically feel
like a criticism. Soap operas do not interest me, but I can see the function that they fulfil and can (just about) understand why people watch them. Why then do many fans have a dislike of this aspect of the new series and feel that at the very least it is the biggest difference between the new and the old and at worst a ‘betrayal’ of everything the old series stood for? Answering this question involves first asking a different one, namely what exactly is Doctor Who? What has the new series ‘betrayed’? The answer is ‘nothing.’ There is no single idea of what the series is and there never has been. For the first four seasons there was no clearly identifiable house style at all, with historical swashbucklers sitting next to outright fantasy. Science fiction usually predominated, if only by a slight margin, but even that ranged from worthy (if sometimes dull) attempts at hard SF to enjoyably (or childishly) pulpy sci-fi. The early outline for the series written by C E Webber stated that the series was neither pure science fiction nor pure fantasy but that writers should ‘avoid the limitations of any label and use the best in any style and category as it suits us’. In many ways Doctor Who was a strange sort of anthology series. A variety of different stories were serialised under the same collective series title, but were also linked by a handful of recurring characters, initially just the TARDIS crew. This is perhaps unsurprising, given that before 1963 most British TV science fiction not aimed exclusively at children had been in the form of one-off plays or short serials sometimes leading to sequels, but not regular series. Over time the format began to establish itself, with certain key plots appearing frequently and a consistent style developing, but both of these were subject to frequent change, especially the latter. For example, the basic plots of ‘The Dalek Invasion of Earth’, ‘The Sun Makers’ and ‘Vengeance on Varos’ are the same: the Doctor helps a small band of rebels overthrow
their oppressors. However, the tones are very different, ranging from the humour of ‘The Sun Makers’ to the bleak world-view of ‘Varos’. Similarly, the themes are individualised to fit the period when they were made. ‘Dalek Invasion’ reflects the residual fear of Nazi invasion still existing only twenty years after World War II, as well as hinting at fears of nuclear annihilation. ‘The Sun Makers’ is the product of a society with a high inflation rate, heavy taxation and industrial unrest while ‘Varos’ reflects the eighties’ anxiety about video nasties. ‘Varos’ ‘Greek chorus’ of characters commenting on the action without being directly involved in it also demonstrates the degree of stylistic variation that is possible. This is almost certainly the series’ greatest strength. It allowed the show to play to the strengths of a particular production team for a while, producing a run of stories similar enough to each other for the audience to have some idea of what they were going to get, while at the same time introducing enough change to prevent the show becoming repetitive or outdated. However, it is also its greatest weakness. Every time the show changes direction it ran the risk of alienating viewers. And the most vocal viewers, the ones who care most about the series, who want it to fit an ideal (usually a childhood ideal) most carefully and who spend the time writing reviews stating why they think the series has gone wrong, are the fans. This explains why the main fan activity often seems to be complaining about the show.

However, there does seem to be something slightly different about the soap opera criticism. Usually the aspect of an era that provokes the greatest criticism from its detractors also leads to the most praise from its supporters, whether the humour of the Williams era or the ‘dark’ seventh Doctor. The soap opera criticism seems to have crossed the divide, with some people who adore the new series seeing it as the main or even sole flaw. In short, if Doctor Who can be science fiction, horror, fantast, action, comedy, and allegory, why does the very idea of associating it with the word ‘soap’ scream ‘WRONG!’ to so many people? Part of the problem
is undoubtedly the novelty of the situation. No doubt once we are used to the style of the new series, it will seem less unusual. However, I think there is a deeper reason. In an attempt to get an impartial view of soap opera, I looked up the term in several dictionaries to get a working definition free of my subjective impressions. Two adjectives that kept recurring were 'domestic' and 'sentimental' and I think this is the key.

Domesticity is not necessarily a problem. As far back as the first episode, *Doctor Who* established a recognisable, often domestic setting and subverted it. This provided many of the series’ most iconic moments: the TARDIS’ huge interior inside the police box shell, the Yeti in the London Underground, the many everyday objects that turned out to be Autons, the Slitheen spaceship crashing in London.

The alien is more shocking when intruding into the mundane than when seen by itself. The danger is that the series could come to focus purely on the domestic at the expense of the extraordinary. After all, this is primarily an escapist science fiction/science fantasy programme. On the whole, I don’t think that this has happened so far, but Boom Town saw the show put Rose and Mickey’s relationship on an equal footing, in terms of plot emphasis, as Margaret’s escape attempts. This is not a problem in one episode, but if it became part of a trend across the whole season, then there would be a real danger of the show changing more drastically than at any time in its history, becoming primarily about the everyday relationship problems of the main characters.

Even if this does not happen, there is still the potential for such a series partly based on present-day Earth to become very cosy. While the alien can appear more frightening against a mundane backdrop, eventually diminishing returns will set in as the audience starts to think ‘what everyday object will turn out to be lethal this week?’ and no longer be shocked. With the Doctor having a base on Earth in Rose’s flat and a cast of recurring characters to help him, including contacts in the government and UNIT, the series could lose its sense of travelling into unknown and inherently
dangerous environments. Many people would argue that this is what happened during the Pertwee era. I tend to agree with this interpretation (although I think it is overstressed sometimes), but at least the UNIT stories were told against a background of diplomatic crises, dangerous scientific projects, corrupt governments and ruthless industrialists, providing a large and at times surprisingly bleak canvas for the show to paint on. This has of course happened in ‘Aliens of London/World War III’ and ‘The Christmas Invasion’, but overall the series gives the impression of being focused almost entirely on the effects of these things at a personal level, narrowing the possible number of stories.

The second problem is with the ‘sentimentality.’ Doctor Who has successfully introduced character-based scenes or stories before, but these tend to be low-key and reflective, such as the Doctor talking about his family in ‘The Tomb of the Cybermen’. This is far from the strong emotions endemic in sentimental soap operas. It is difficult to believe that characters who are presented as audience identification figures would not be psychologically scarred by the death and danger with which the average companion is faced, yet this can not be shown realistically in a family series. In the past, the audience has simply suspended their disbelief for the purposes of accepting the events of the series, yet this is not possible if the stories themselves draw attention to the emotional wellbeing of the companions. The other tactic used by the old series to deal with realistic emotional responses was to introduce supporting characters specifically for this purpose, Fewsham and Poul being good examples. The fact that they did not have to finish the story sane or even alive allowed the writers greater freedom. In addition, the high stakes of the average Doctor Who story can make the problems of the individual characters seem irrelevant, even silly. The conclusion of ‘World War III’ sees Jackie worrying about Rose’s possible death in stopping the Slitheen, yet as she will die anyway, along with everyone else in the world, if they aren’t stopped, the entire subplot can’t help but seem illogical and grafted on from an entirely different format.

It is worth noting that
this problem has appeared before. The spin-offs have tried to examine the characters’ emotions in more depth, but being intended for an older audience, have had more freedom to show realistic responses (which doesn’t mean they always succeeded!). On TV, the early eighties saw an attempt to move in this direction within a similar timeslot to that of the new series. This provides some hints as to how such a quasi-soap opera format could succeed. The main reason it failed in the eighties was that emotional storylines were introduced but not dealt with beyond the opening minutes of the next episode. Events such as the death of Adric and Tegan’s possession by the Mara were presented as if they would have major long-term consequences, yet were rarely alluded to again, except as fan-pleasing continuity references. When Tegan leaves the TARDIS saying ‘it’s stopped being fun’ anyone seeing the programme as an ongoing narrative, as the production team are signalling them to do, wonders if the events of stories like ‘Logopolis’, ‘Kinda’ and ‘Earthshock’ could really have been described by Tegan as ‘fun’.

Where the show did succeed in the early eighties was that even if the focus of the stories was the emotions of the regulars, these emotions were provoked at least some of the time by events that could not occur in mainstream soap opera, such as Tegan arriving on one of the last Earth colonies in ‘Frontios’. This is not something that the new series has neglected entirely, with ‘The End of the World’ and ‘Fathers’ Day’ in particular standing out for the way they marry the science fiction to the emotions. I see no reason for the series to fail if it concentrates on examining the effect of events like these on its characters, rather than the more mundane aspects of their relationships. However, this aspect of the show should usually remain subsidiary to the science fiction elements, to satisfy the audience’s desire for scary, escapist, science fantasy adventures. Skilful writing will also be required to put the characters through extreme stress without permanent damage, while keeping a reasonable degree of internal consistency in the presentation of a universe which has been created by taking very traditional, even clichéd, Doctor Who plots and keeping them fresh by adding more realistic characters.
Adam Povey guides you through a small exhibit devoted to a certain Police Box and its inhabitants. 
Pictures by Rebecca Logan.

Much was mooted of the DocSoc Trip, an audacious endeavour to visit Cardiff to see those parts of the country graced by the BBC in its efforts to film our beloved show. On the day, there were but two brave enough to pay the £30 for a train to Cardiff. Luckily for you, one of them is rather good with a camera and the other is an editor in need of material, so presented for your entertainment is a walkthrough of the Doctor Who Exhibit at Cardiff Bay.

After a 1km walk from Cardiff Central Station, we descended upon a queue of families shuffling into a temporary stand in a shopping centre, bearing a few posters and emitting the timeless theme. Luckily, the exhibit had no entrance fee, so the wallet was saved from further indignity. Standing guard over the entrance, pruning queue-jumpers and the poorly dressed, were the Trinny and Susannah robots, flanked closely by a Slytheen and its creation, the Space Pig ('Aliens of
London”). The walls were decorated with newspaper cuttings, mostly from the local press about how someone as famous as Billie Piper came to be in Cardiff. It worked well as an entrance, attracting most passers-by and of course, sending fan drooling into overdrive.

The first proper section served a very useful purpose: it showed the old Doctors. Hopefully, the “millions” of children to have flooded through the wide, plasterboard gates of this demonstration stopped to spend a moment contemplating the faces of those that came before and reading the brief descriptions of each one’s tenure. Russell T. Davis added his opinions of how the old program relates to the new with a few informative signs (in Welsh and English). However, most of the children will probably not have noticed as each display bore a large yellow button which revealed an old monster behind a screen, including an Ice Warrior and an 80’s Cyberman.

The rest of the exhibit concentrated on the new series, which is what we expected to see (for the old series, visit Blackpool or Brighton). The deadly Santa Brass Quartet stood guard over a looped clip from ‘The Christmas Invasion’ and a production model of the Tardis control room. To the side, Autons stormed out of a shop window, but were ironically the only display sealed behind glass. This lead onto a large drape bearing images of the Tardis, the Doctor, and Rose. All well and good, but not particularly useful. A small child assisted, though, by pressing another yellow button to reveal that the Tardis stood just inches away behind the drape (sadly where cameras could not reach it).

After a few moments of paying homage to the blue box, we walked in to the next room. This was quite loud and filled with people and flashbulbs. The cries of “Exterminate,” though, told us what lay ahead. In all its gold glory stood a new Dalek, moving with an eerie sense of life while the first lines it exclaimed in ‘Dalek’ played in the background. This was flanked by two slightly more damaged models (one revealing the creature inside and a burnt-out shell). The model of
the Emperor Dalek stood to the side of his minions, which greatly overshadowed the Emperor’s one foot of height.

The Daleks also eclipsed the bomb from ‘The Empty Child’ sitting harmlessly to the side, framed by a picture of Captain Jack riding it (presumably to its current position). Following the wall around from the weapon of mass destruction led to a monitor showing a featurette on the design of the series’ prosthetics, with a few half completed masks as illustration. This was as close to genuine information the exhibition got, and sadly most visitors seemed to pass it by, instead gazing upon a group of costumes from ‘The End of the World’ opposite. Most of the creatures from the episode were represented, barring the Face of Bo and the satellite staff.

Finally, there was the model of Cardiff, complete with power station, from ‘Boom Town’ accompanied by a few misleading posters showing location shooting in Cardiff superimposed over a map of the town centre (misleading as the images’ positions on the map had nothing to do with where the filming actually occurred). On the way out through the gift shop, one could not help but admire the sheer volume of merchandise that has been produced, including a veritable army of remote control Daleks, more sonic screwdrivers than one would feasibly require to open every door in the world, enough T-shirts to clothe an inner-city secondary school, and a number of autographed DVDs and pictures.

Overall, the exhibit was far too much glamour and display and not enough information and video clips to maintain one’s interest for long. However, considering it was free and only temporary, it was excellent and served its purpose of advertising the series perfectly. There are already ‘proper’ collections of Doctor Who memorabilia and adding another here would have been pointless. And, once this exhibit closes (by the time you read this, it shall already have done so long ago), the props will probably be stored in one of these and we can continue to enjoy them. May the BBC continue to put these sorts of things up across the country.
You know you want it

How to attract the children in

Captain Jack’s Bomb, with explanatory picture

One could never say that Doctor Who villains were easy to spot
James Chapman at the Oxford University History Society, as summarised by Matthew Kilburn

All my life I’ve taken for granted that Doctor Who was an important cultural phenomenon; and there are a growing number of books around which not only take that for granted, but sing it from the rooftops. When the Oxford University History Society thinks it’s a good idea to have a meeting about Doctor Who, you feel the shades of the fans of twenty-five years ago - a time when fanzine letters columns were filled with fans wondering if the programme could ever be ‘intellectually respectable’ – materialising with vindication in the corners of the room.

James Chapman, the speaker, is senior lecturer in film and television history at the Open University, which is the kind of job which tempts this eighteenth-century historian to jump ship. His previous publications include Saints and Avengers: British Adventure Series of the 1960s, Past and Present: National Identity and the British Historical Film, and Licence to Thrill: A Cultural History of the James Bond Films. It now seems practically inevitable that Chapman would turn his attention to Doctor Who, but until very recently, this was not the case.

Chapman’s talk concerned both the history of Doctor Who and
Who’s treatment of history. He began by explicitly placing Doctor Who within his personal Anglo-British sense of heritage. In 1989, England lost the Ashes to Australia, and Doctor Who finished; in 2005, Doctor Who came back, and England regained the Ashes. From the part these iconic moments play in his personal mythology, he moved to discussing the history of the series’ production in the context of its fiction, and while for the sake of argument falling back on the usually received account of the programme’s origins, acknowledging the large contribution of Sydney Newman, he no-ed that the discussions which led to the creation of Doctor Who began many months before Sydney Newman arrived at the BBC.

According to Chapman, traditionally cultural history has regarded Doctor Who as a conservative programme, whether considered politically, socially or aesthetically. John Tulloch and Manuel Alvarado’s Doctor Who: The Unfolding Text, published back in 1983, saw the programme’s narrative storytelling as conservative, and more recently work on science fiction television design has tended to dismiss Doctor Who as culturally conservative in that arena too. Chapman will argue in his book that this view is mistaken: he cited cases in the early 1970s where Doctor Who stories were commissioned with political issues in mind, such as ‘The Curse of Peladon’, ‘The Green Death’ and ‘The Monster of Peladon’.

Chapman ran through the different Doctors for the benefit of those in the audience who were unfamiliar with the series’s history, though given the numbers of people in the audience who were DocSoc members or on our mailing list, this was probably a minority. Troughton was described with the ‘cosmic hobo’ tag, though surprisingly Chapman said that he had been unable to find where this description originated: Steve Goddard, sitting next to me, was sure that it had appeared in an edition of Terrance Dicks and Malcolm Hulke’s The Making of Doctor Who, and checking, he was right – page 31 of the 1976 edition.

Chapman, uncontrovertially, places Jon Pertwee’s Doctor in the tradition of gentlemanly television heroes such as John Steed of The Avengers, and Adam Adamant. In passing, he remarked that the exile to Earth was nothing or little to do with the budget, as the budget per episode went up in 1970. Of Tom Baker,
I've noted that in Chapman's eyes he 'bestrude' the series, while Peter Davison was the 'most heroic' Doctor, in part because he lacked the 'masculine authority' of his immediate predecessors. After Davison, said Chapman, the turnover of Doctors came to resemble the recent leadership of the Conservative Party, and the BBC Archives for the period are still closed with the result that it's difficult to gain an insight into what was going on. Colin Baker seemed to carry the can for falling ratings and general instability afflicting the series in the mid-1980s; the series had lost touch with a crucial part of its demographic, the young adult audience identified back in 1963 as Juke Box Jury watchers, instead gaining a preponderance of over-35s. The question of whether John Nathan-Turner was making the series for fans was raised, including Ian Levine's involvement and the controversy over who exactly wrote 'Attack of the Cybermen'.

Sylvester McCoy's tenure, James Chapman thought, was fascinating, changing the Doctor into someone dark and manipulative with a grand design. This was difficult to analyse because of the absence of primary texts, and the inevitable selectivity of Andrew Cartmel's recent memoirs has contributed to an already heavily mythologised version of the last years of the 1963-1989 series, comparable to the varying accounts of its origins.

Moving to some of the series' broader themes, Chapman remarked that the most noticeable trends in the programme's ratings in the 1960s are that audiences fell in summer, not whenever the programme ran a 'historical' story without science fiction elements. Chapman cited 'The Aztecs' as an example of the programme's illustrating that the past is alien to the liberal humanist values espoused by Doctor Who and voiced, in this story, mainly by Barbara. The Doctor's doctrine of non-interference as voiced in 'The Aztecs' - "You cannot change history! Not one line!" varies according to the writer, with Dennis Spooner and Donald Cotton both heavily qualifying John Lucarotti's Doctrine in order to allow the Doctor to shape events. In Cotton's 'The Myth Makers', for example the Doctor initially dismisses the
the Trojan horse as a myth and refuses to suggest it.

Towards the end of William Hartnell’s time on the programme came ‘The Gunfighters’, which supposedly received the lowest audience figures ever. This wasn’t the case, but incoming producer Innes Lloyd preferred to make a Doctor Who that was dominated by monster-led science-fiction stories, leading to a narrowing-down of genres, and the rise of the Cybermen as a new race of enemies more frightening, in Chapman’s view, than the Daleks, whom he thinks children for the most part liked. The Cybermen represented mid-1960s apprehensions about a technocracy that would turn people into items of technology themselves.

Later periods of Doctor Who returned to the past, and in Peter Davison’s first year experimented with a return to the ‘pure historical’. Chapman argues that in ‘Black Orchid’ Doctor Who presented its audience with a proto-Gosford Park, a tale of social hypocrisy in the 1920s exploiting the territory of early 1980s films such as Chariots of Fire. For Chapman, Peter Davison was a heritage cinema Doctor. Showing a clip from ‘Black Orchid’ to illustrate his argument, Chapman commented that filming sporting events without professional sportsmen is difficult - during the cricket scenes in that story, Peter Davison actually takes a wicket, and there is visible uncertainty among the cast about whether or not that should be a take. Sadly this attention to contemporary trends disappeared as the programme catered increasingly for a cult viewership later in the decade.

Chapman remarked that the new series seems to have returned Doctor Who, for the moment, to its successful phase of the 1960s and 1970s where it was able to simultaneously negotiate fluctuations in public taste and the prejudices of BBC senior management. As for its treatment of history, ‘The Empty Child’ embraced historical revisionism by undermining the myth of the Blitz. Its heroine is a young woman, Nancy, scavenging with a group of homeless children; the legend of community solidarity is subverted with their tales of abandonment and child abuse. The Doctor invokes the traditional myth of the Blitz in his speech to Nancy, but it is a long way from her experience.

This account is very much my reconstruction of James Chapman’s argument. I think the meeting was much enjoyed and James Chapman seemed to find it difficult to get out of St Peter’s, so many were the questions and observations. I anticipate that I will be nodding furiously a lot of the time when I get to read the book, but I’m looking forward to seeing what I disagree with as well.
The Gods Do Weep
Alex M. Cameron

To the memory of all lost souls of past and future hurricane seasons.

Weird weather just follows me. I get out of N’awlins, now it’s less than a month to Mardi Gras and I’m showing little Snowflake Antoine two feet of her namesakes in Marcus Garvey Park on a Sunday. Or maybe I’m just lucky because the jazz shines in me.

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You asked me that before. I plain don’t know. Hell, I’m gonna miss him like crazy, but I never really got to knowing him. Wasn’t really tryin’ta find out. I guess, guy saves your ass, y’all ain’t startin’ axin’ him his Social Security number. Well, I don’t. Not even when he got shot by some snipers. Closest we ever got was when he arrived, and when he left. I was wandering around thinking the sky’d fallen, I wasn’t wrong, morning of, uh, Monday, right? Yeah, Monday – and he gets right into my face, takes it by both hands, like this, looks right in my eyes, he says, “Balthazar LaFontaine, listen to me.” I listen, all right, but damn if I can remember what he said, or where he got my
name. Then, leaving, this was in Houston, he’s almost a whole ‘nother guy. Or maybe the same guy, but the jazz is breakin’ through. He sees me off like a brother, holds me close, says, “Thank you.” “For what?” I’m sayin’. “Haven’t you guessed?” he goes, and that’s all she wrote. I never saw him again, but I can’t forget the smile as he turned and left. Yeah, you couldn’t kill the jazz in that soul.

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Kinda tall, not big tall. Real skinny. Maybe five-ten, not over one-hundred-fifty. When I hadta carry him, it wasn’t easy, but it wasn’t like Junior Delmonico carrying his Poppa all the way from their house on Amaryllis, God rest ‘em both. Could feel the bones. Kinda square – square shoulders, square face. Strange hair – he wore it kinda long, sorta tied back like this in a black ribbon. Like something from an old-time statue, La Fayette or somethin’. No, it was the eyes were real special. Like a krewe just threw me a pair of the shiniest silver dollars you did see, and they’d reflect the sky. Blue in summer, and that kinda grey when there’s a storm comin’. Even a bit of green in there, like the Lake. Those kind of eyes. No sir, ma’am, no po’try, just the jazz talkin’. He was dressed as a medic, and I was thinkin’ thank God there’s help comin’, but then he says, no help but me, no buses, no Guard, no army, no mayor, no gov’nor, no pres’dent, no nothin’, haul ass if you wanna live. I thought he was just trying to scare me into getting the hell out, but he’s damn right. One of them news channels was showin’ our street just a few days ago, and it’s like Katrina just hit. Nothin’s changed. Nobody’s bustin’ ass to get the crap off of the streets. Shivonne and me’re stayin’ at Tyrone’s here in Harlem – she’s a family friend, Tyrone and I burned draft cards together – and we figure we did good not going back. If they don’t care ‘bout the Lower Ninth, they don’t give a damn for the real N’awlins. They talk about jazz cities, but jazz ain’t in the cities, it’s in the people. Like Satchmo. Like the Doc.

Yeah, the Doc. That’s what he called himself. How old? Younger than me, older than Shivonne, but I couldn’t tell you more. Think he was in the special forces or somethin’, he’d been fighting some kinda long war, it’d really worn him down. No, not
Iraq, that was Shivonne’s husband, died in Fallujah middle of last year. Poor guy. Shivonne’d wanted to be a nurse before she met him and Snow came along. Now... Anyway, he said you might as well fight a war on dandruff as a war on terror, that’s what the Doc said. Yeah, he could be a funny guy sometimes, even if he didn’t show it. Told us somethin’ ‘bout bein’ in a boat on the Skookle something River somewhere talkin’ to a guy about mass communication, somethin’ like that, said, “what d’you think people’ll use it for?” Doc says, “what d’you know everyone’s gonna be interested in, Mr Franklin?” Guy’s a bit drunk, takes a while for him to get it, gets it real slow, then he’s laughin’ so hard the boat nearly turns over. Sounded better when the Doc told me it. He’s good at that. And damn, I never thought he’d tell that kinda joke. Looked too polite, too British.

Remembered somethin’, he had on this kinda bracelet, silver or steel or somethin’. Not an emergency bracelet kind of thing, definitely decorated. Not his kinda style, which made me think of time I was last over here when a guy came onto me kinda strong, and I saw his wedding band and thought “hell no.” Said to him, “They may not let me marry, but I ain’t ‘gainst the institution of marriage, and I sure as hell ain’t lettin’ ya cheat on it. Not with me.” I figure, guy as good-lookin’ as the Doc has someone waitin’ for him somewhere, but the way he seems to live, it’s gonna be a long wait. He’s got a bounceback jive, but trouble just seems to follow him.

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Nine of us, I think. Let me figure it. Me, then Shivonne and Snowflake. Then we hiked over to Amaryllis, water’s coming up all the time, we ended up taking out the Delmonicos in a rowboat floated by. Junior, Poppa Delmonico, Junior’s brother Jack, he was in Sanitation when he came back from ‘Nam with Junior, couple of Latino punks trying to heist the house till Doc just flat out told ‘em to stop and get the hell goin’. Caught up with Sally, she’s Jack’s daughter, I must be one of the only guys in the country she hasn’t divorced but she gets food stamps instead of alimony. No money for a lawyer. She’s with Jack in Baton Rouge last thing I heard of them. Tryin’ to get Junior’s and Poppa’s remains identified. I guess that’s ten if you count the Doc. Funny kinda family we made, crammed into someone’s pickup on the interstate headed for Houston. More like a tribe of Israel. Hell, the Doc even called himself “Moses” when we stopped at a roadblock, but he said after that wasn’t his name. Should’ve been. A prophet carryin’ his people ‘cross the waters to the Promised Land. Doc drivin’ with his good hand, he’d been shot in the other shoulder, I remember. Said
somethin’ ‘bout this bein’ the other side of the road to the one he was used to, so definitely British. Been out of the country for a while, I figured from his accent. A long time fightin’ someone else’s wars. I asked him, why not just stop?

He said nothin’, said somethin’ low bout “on deck” – Navy, I figure – then, “gallows of galley” something, finally, “everything, Zazar, I’m afraid of everything.”

“You ‘fraid of me, then, buddy?” but he didn’t answer. I guess whatever war he was fighting broke him. He was one hurt guy. When he came around from the gunshot wounds he was all for leavin’ us behind so we’d be safe from whoever shot him. Or maybe the weird guys in the chopper that came afterwards, tried to pick him but nobody else up, ended up leaving him and some supplies behind. Said to him, you’re the only one knows the way out of here, can keep the rest of them in line. I can help, but damn, I’m just a music teacher, not a doctor. I’ve got ‘em this far, but I still need you. We’ve all gotta take some responsibility, some risk.

He came with us, Junior saw to the shoulder – that’s the first time I’ve seen him not shake since he came back from Vietnam – and we carried on. He wasn’t happy. “At the self-willed folly of mankind/The Gods do weep,” that was one of his. Sounds like Shakespeare or somethin’. Someone told it him once. Maybe I’ll make a song out of it to remember him. Sometimes song travels faster’n words. He was good with a song, lots of tunes he knew to keep us going as we walked. Even found an Elvis tape in the pickup, asked if we Louisianans didn’t mind a gentleman from Tennessee on the stereo. Cheered us all right up.

Then there was that time, we were still getting out of the city, Snow wasn’t sleeping and Bluebird – Shivonne – was out of it from walking. We were all pretty out of it, walking through the backstreets Pedro and Diego knew to avoid the cops looking for looters. Not like we were looters, but one white guy, two Latinos and a bunch of black people doesn’t look like anything else to the NOPD. Even if the one white guy is wearing some of the paramedic’s costume, and I’ve got his jacket. Anyhow, he was rocking Snow to sleep, singing some lullaby in a language I’ve never heard before or since, and you hear a lot of ‘em here at Tyrone’s. And the light was bad, we’d made a fire but it was going out, but I think I saw a tear or two in his eyes. Don’t tell Shivonne, she had a hard enough time with him losing it over her carrying Chris’s Glock 9mm with her – mostly to remember Chris, not for shootin’ anyone – without hearin’ this bit. I woke up a little as he was singing. He was saying, “Why deserve to live when history is unwritten,” something like that, and he’d got something in his hands,
I’m thinking shit he’s going to do something to Snowflake, he’s going crazy or something, and I wake the hell up, grab it out of his hands in the dark, throw it away – it’s the Glock I thought he got rid of, and he was going to shoot himself, not Snowflake, I can tell just looking at him. I don’t sleep the rest of that night, and I feel like hell at sunup, but he took care of Snow, he took care of himself. Strange thing is, he’d been walking way ahead till that point. Thought he was just tryin’ to find a safe route in all that crap Katrina and then the levees breakin’ left behind.

After that night, he was walking right in the middle of us, making sure Junior was OK carrying Poppa, and all. Maybe he’d been running too long, the walking just running in slo-mo. Even when he walked away in Houston, just walking away down the street, he walked slow, like we were still with him.

I guess he got infected by our jazz, just like I got infected by his, keeping the rest of us guys together. I hope he doesn’t forget it whatever else happens to him.

When he walked away, I said, not thinkin’, “See you ‘round, right?” like he an’ I were best buddies or something. God knows, I’ve had few enough real friends wantin’ to be with somebody like me. Thank God for Bluebird. And the Doc. (He left the trumpet I’ve had since I was a kid, was looking for in what used to be home when he caught up with me. Left it at Tyrone’s at Christmas, when we were still at that hotel in LaGuardia. Guess we got friends in common. Diff’rent looks, said Tyrone, but had to be the same guy.)

“Maybe,” he said, and that was the true jazz. Po’ man’s jazz is all cymbals an’ trumpets at the end, big shout, big jump, yeah. Tough when you’re all outta breath. Real jazz... well.

Script Crises, Monsters, and Incoherent Crap

Part 2

Terrance Dicks moves on to novelising and philosophising, as recounted by Adam Povey.

With the breaking up of the Pertwee Era’s creative staff, Terrance started his involvement with the Target novelisations. Target had begun a line of children’s books, starting by buying the rights to some older, poorly selling Doctor Who novelisations, which promptly flew off the shelves. Their editor approached the Doctor Who staff to find more writers and Terrance accepted. He may never have written a book, but he had always wanted to.

He joined a team working through the old scripts. However, the low rates of pay didn’t retain the other writers for long, and eventually Terrance was writing all of them, at about one a month. Nicely enough, large amounts of money began to come his way, becoming a best-selling children’s author in the process (tax bills also rained down a few years later, once the money had disappeared, such that he was “practically ruined by being rich”).

He also managed to write for the television program through connections with the staff, supplementing his income with the occasional episode. He was generally hired when a story was needed in a hurry, but this suited Terrance’s style. In particular, there was ‘The Vampire Mutations’, which suited his preferred subjects of Nazis or vampires (he intends to one day write of Nazi Vampires). Unfortunately, he pitched the story just as the BBC decided to produce a big budget dramatization of Dracula. Hence, Doctor Who was allowed nowhere near vampires, for fear of people
thinking they were taking the mick.

The ensuing script crisis meeting inspired Bob to state that, “I’ve always wanted to do a story on a lighthouse.” Like most people, Terrance knew bugger all about lighthouses. However, Bob insisted, “Never mind, Terrance. Go out and buy the ‘Boy’s Book of Lighthouses’ and find out about them and give me a story that is set on a lighthouse, preferably by tomorrow.” And so ‘The Horror of Fang Rock’ was devised, widely considered, much to Terrance’s surprise, to be one of the best episodes.

However, his vampire story was eventually produced when a new script editor dug through the rejected scripts. Leela’s parts had to be rewritten for Romana and title was changed to ‘State of Decay’ to protect the secret of the episode’s enemies. Terrance didn’t think the twist was particularly secret as enemies “with reds eyes, ghastly white faces, that never come out in daylight,” might give it away.

To add to his growing fame, Doctor Who was now broadcast in the US and conventions began to invite him along. The fan culture amazed him, with groups of UNIT troops wandering amidst 50 Tom Bakers. One in New Orleans stands out particularly as his very conscientious minder ensured that he was never without beer. As such, the phone call at 5am the next morning from Eric Saward, the next script editor, asking Terrance to write the anniversary special was accepted rather too quickly. He later discovered the staff had decided to have Bob Holmes and himself write separate episodes and chose the better. Terrance insisted this was rubbish and that Bob should write it. Bob, possibly assisted by a dislike of John-Nathan Turner, didn’t write the episode and Terrance ended up with it anyway. Never less, the convention goers quite liked the information that a special was being produced.

Hence, ‘The Five Doctors’ awaited him, with one actor being replaced. Initially, the villain was the Master, but JNT decided that the Master didn’t provide a sufficient twist, so the story was changed to its current form. Once he finished the script, Tom Baker had decided not to appear in the episode, so the entirety had to be rewritten without Baker using a convenient time loop. Footage from the
cancelled episode 'Shada' was used so that Baker appeared, justifying the episode's title. Interestingly, in its original form, Baker stole the Master's device and was tempted to use it, which would have been nice to see.

Eventually came the time when all scripts had been novelised (except 'Pirate Planet' as Douglas Adams laughed at the meagre pay). Someone then got the idea to write original stories. Terrance wrote one of the first of these books aimed at a slightly older audience, but wasn't greatly involved and continues to be amazed by their output of two books per month. He recently wrote a Troughton story called 'War World', somewhat tying into 'The War Games', and he thinks this completes the circle and will probably end his involvement with Doctor Who.

However, he does maintain a connection to the series through Paul Cornell, who started as an eager young fan buying Terrance pints at conventions and now writes for the new series. As such, Terrance was invited to its premier, along with Barry Letts. They approached with caution, remembering how much they despised the last attempt to resurrect the series with Paul McGann ("Incoherent crap,"). Fortunately, they liked the new one and managed to meet enough old fans that Terrance can now drop names for the rest of his life. An audience member asked about the selection process for scripts. Apparently, the producers would let it be known that they wanted scripts. A writer would be selected and Terrance and Barry would talk with him to work out some ideas. Successive outlines and breakdowns would be commissioned to ensure the idea worked before being fully commissioned. Such it was ensured that the creative staff actually liked the idea and the script crises of his youth were avoided.

However, rewrites are to be expected. The first draft is discussed among the creative staff and turned into a second draft, which is then polished up by the script editor. Generally, this required only a few changes, but sometimes the whole thing had to be redone. However, Terrance always believed that by this point, it was his job to fix problems and the writer could be paid. After this there would be routine complaints from the director and actors that the script was completely unworkable and that the lines made...
no sense. This would generate more rewrites and ensure that the actors and director could distance themselves from failure and claim the credit for successful stories. Generally, 70 - 80% of the script surviving was rather good.

Next came the ‘specific’ questions, asking about rewrites of ‘Seeds of Death’. Terrance remembered rewriting a lot of ‘Seeds of Death’ to make it workable. Luckily, the writer wasn’t bothered, despite Terrance’s worries. Even the best writers got frequent rewrites for practical, technical, and stylistic reasons. Vast chunks of Bob Holmes’ scripts are actually written by Terrance. He recalled ‘The Time Warrior’, for which the ‘lighthouse episode’ was probably revenge. Terrance wanted a historical show, a style Bob hated, so the final episode called for, “A charge of hundreds of warriors,” which he knew full well couldn’t be done. Terrance took the scene and redrafted it to a slightly more practical one with the Doctor throwing a few smoke bombs over a wall.

A rewrite in the opposite direction took place in ‘Mind of Evil’ where there is a scene in which a missile is stolen from a lorry. The writer and Terrance devised a scene in which someone puts up a “Diversion” notice, directing the lorry to a fake policeman who stops the lorry, knocks out the driver, and drives off. The director, Mike Fergusson, believed the scene was too simple and asked the producer for something more interesting. A hugely expensive scene with helicopters, tons of people, and a “James Bond feel” resulted, generating a huge overspend. Afterwards, the director explained why he changed the scene, “Look at it this way Terrance. You were doing your job and I was doing mine.”

The next question inquired if anything had inspired the need for an advanced technology to fall back on an older one in ‘Seeds of Death’. Nothing in particular had, except the nostalgia that seems to permeate history. “We thought it was a nice idea if people would one day look back to the good old days when you had a rocket...not this soulless technological nonsense of being matter transmitted.”
The final ‘specific’ question asked if a map in the same episode, that implied that Tokyo and Moscow were dependent on Washington and London, was intentional. Terrance didn’t think it likely, but that the opinions of the production crew couldn’t help be expressed in someway on the program.

When asked about the new series, Terrance confirmed that he thought the Doctor, companion, stories, monsters, budget, and technology are fantastic and, though different, the show could do so much more than the originals. Unlike the TV Movie, it stuck to the classic formula of, “The Doctor and his companion go off in the Tardis somewhere and they land and the Doctor comes out and says ‘Here’s a nice peaceful looking planet, let’s have a look around,’ and something dreadful happens.” However, he does admit that the 50 minute format, though not to his taste, is more appropriate to a modern audience. The 25 minute format was born out of the Saturday morning serials ending in a cliffhanger, which doesn’t work anymore (some fans may disagree).

It was generally agreed that the old Doctor Who died out as it had lost touch with its audience. Terrance added that by the late 80’s it was no longer the Saturday night ‘hook’ (the program you started the evening with to ensure no one could be bothered to get up and change to channel). In modern times, with remotes and other channels, though, a program is a success with 3-5 million viewers compared to the minimum expectation of 6 million in the old days, as it’s easier to change the channel.

Another audience member desired to know which monsters actually did work. Raymond Cusick’s Daleks always worked well. Terrance deeply appreciated Raymond’s work, as apparently the script described them rather vaguely as “Hideous machine like creatures who glide without apparent legs.” He also liked the Draconians, as the rubber mask was moulded to the actor’s face allowing emotions to be expressed for once. The Silurians and Sea Devils also got a mention.
He then was asked about the novelisation process. Terrance agreed that a lot more can be done a lot cheaper with the reader’s imagination than on the screen. His editor once commented that he loved the scene in ‘Spearhead from Space’ where a tank explodes and a tentacle wraps around the Doctor and he would have loved to see it on the telly. Terrance replied, “If you had seen that, you would have seen John Pertwee grappling unconvincingly with a rubbery tentacle and pulling silly faces.”

He recounted ‘The Five Doctors’ when asked about on-the-spot script alterations. When Sarah-Jane is found by Pertwee, she says something like, “It’s you Doctor, but it’s the old you. You changed.” To which he responds, “It’s all eyes and teeth.” Fans have often wondered how the Doctor knew what he looked like. However, in the original script, Sarah said both lines and it is likely that Pertwee decided on the day he rather liked the line and used it himself, irrespective of continuity problems. There were also once Autons, with their own village, in the script, but they were edited out for budgetary reasons.

Another large change was that the script editor deemed that Pertwee and Sarah-Jane needed another obstacle on their way to the tower and wanted Terrance to devise something, “Dynamic, exciting, dramatic, and above all cheap.” And so was the scene with the Raston Robot attacking the Cybermen born, yet another improvisation becoming one of the best scenes of the show.

And so ended the talk with a flurry of autograph signing, despite his claims that no one ever wants the writer’s autograph at conventions. Overall, it is beyond doubt that Doctor Who would be very different had Terrance never been involved. It seems that the limited budget of Doctor Who simultaneously gave and also denied us some of the greatest scenes in the series history. However, more money generally means bigger stories, so hopefully the new series will continue to please us all.

Terrance Dicks (right) and Barry Letts being menaced by a Dalek.