

Heather Wright (Melanie).

"Melanie was supposed to be someone who was happiest on the Cote d'Azur"

Heather Wright played the character of Melanie in three second series episodes. Young, beautiful and brash, she quickly became a focal point of the new-comers from a neighbouring community. Melanie represented a youth which had refused to let go of the old order, and longed for the return of creature comforts. In a world which was bleak and grim, she still longed to see the bright lights.

How did Heather start out in acting? "I went to drama school at somewhere called The Arts Educational. When I left there I went more or less immediately to do a film called The Belstone Fox, which so many years later I still seem to be trying to live down! I then did some theatre and various other things and then I came to do Survivors."

How did Heather get the part of Melanie in Survivors? "I was cast by Pennant Roberts. What happened was that I wrote to Terry Dudley because I had heard that another series was going to be made. He asked me to come in and see him and he told me that I would have to meet the director. So I went in and saw Pennant and that was it! I had watched the first series which I had liked very much. I thought that Survivors was terribly different and there was nothing like it on television. I also liked the fact that it was set in the countryside. The whole concept was something that I liked. The characters were interesting and the premise of having to cope after such a disaster and the question 'what would you do and how would you cope?' was something that I'd never thought of before and when I saw this series I asked myself the same questions. That's why I wrote that letter to the producer Terry Dudley. I also needed a job! One of the things I liked about Survivors was how laid back it was. The scenes were generally slow-moving and the characters were allowed to develop. My mother often complains about today's television saying that she can't get the gist of what's going on because they jump about from one scene to another so very quickly. I also liked Survivors because it was about ordinary people and their lives. This is also what I like about many French films."

How did Heather get on with the somewhat experimental Outside Broadcast cameras, as some actors have said that they didn't like them at all. "I thought it was alright. It had a much starker quality I think than it would have had if it had been done on film. I remember people saying that the lighting wasn't as good as on film. But it seemed fine to me and certainly didn't worry me. It must be said that I had done very little up till then so could not compare it to anything. I just learned my words and did my part, and as long as the director said it was alright then I was happy! I am not a very technical sort of person and don't pay much attention to what they are doing. There was a lot of talk at the time about these new cameras and the video tape."

Does Heather remember the brief given to her by Pennant as to the character of Melanie? "She was supposed to be someone who was happiest on the Cote d'Azur. She was someone who liked to jet-set around and was used to dining out at nice restaurants and going to opening nights, which was something that I wasn't used to doing at all! I'm much happier with a quieter life out in the country. But that is the brief that I was given."

Did Heather find a sense of comradeship on set while making Survivors? "Oh yes, everyone was great. Ian, Lucy and Denis had already done a season so I was very much a newcomer and they couldn't have been nicer. It was a really lovely job to do. I've remained a good friend of Ian's ever since."

How did Heather feel about the location work on Callow Hill and did she enjoy her time with the others at The King's Head in Monmouth? "Well, I didn't stay at The King's Head. A lot of people did in fact stay there but Stephen Tate, June Page, a couple of others and myself rented a cottage on an estate near there and just outside Monmouth, which was much better than the hotel. It was much cheaper for us to live out. I seem to remember that we were given a weekly allowance and our expenses came out of that. If we had stayed in The King's Head then all the money would have gone on that."

Heather's first episode was the Roger Parkes story New Arrivals which was directed by Pennant Roberts. Does Heather have any recollections of this episode? "I remember that Ian Hastings played a certain Mark Carter who was an expert in agriculture and thought he would make a better leader than Charles. I also remember that Pennant was very good at making me feel welcome. They were all charming and very friendly. I wasn't the only newcomer in this episode which made it easier."

Heather's second story was Martin Worth's Over the Hills which was directed by Eric Hills. "I remember being in the mill at Skenfrith and playing a kind of timing-game with a rope. This was with June Page, whose character had fallen pregnant. She lost the baby because of the game. I remember endless times spent on one floor or another of the mill shouting down and playing this game with a stop-watch while she was supposed to climb up. My memory is that the rope game was what we played to get our kicks with

me as the leader, and that seemed very odd to me. I certainly wouldn't have got my kicks like that, but perhaps Melanie would have done. At the time I thought the story was somewhat odd but

I'm sure that the baby issue would be more important today."

Heather's final story was the final episode of the second series, *New World*, written by Martin Worth and directed by Terence Williams. "I remember that I wanted to go off in the balloon! I was desperate to have a go in the balloon, but I remember that the balloon was tethered to the ground by ropes all the time because of the insurance and they were only allowed to go up a little bit. I also got to ride a horse in this episode, which I enjoyed very much."

Does Heather believe that a series like *Survivors* has any relevance for the television audience of today? "Yes, I do. I find it strange that they haven't repeated the series on terrestrial television since I think it would go down well. I would certainly be interested in watching a series like it. Just look at *Aids*, for example. There could easily be a series about a plague which spreads around the globe. I am tired of police and medical series."