

Lucy Fleming (Jenny Richards).

"I liked the exploratory nature of the series, the way it turned civilisation back to front"

Over the course of the three year run of Survivors, nobody appeared in more episodes than Lucy Fleming. She made very much her own the part of Jenny Richards, London secretary and then wife and mother in the brave new world into which the remnants of mankind were thrust.

How did Lucy start out in acting, and does she prefer television or theatre? "I like them both really, but I think I prefer television, but I like doing theatre from time to time, just to keep one's hand in. My mother, Celia Johnson, was a very well known actress, although she was the only one of her family who was, so I can't say that we had a very theatrical upbringing or anything like that. I started working in the rep at Farnham, and got a few small parts. I then did a few plays at the Royal Court, and odd little television parts came along. I then appeared in some West End shows, including the Noel Coward play Hay Fever, with my mother. In fact, I also played my mother as a young woman; she was doing a television play, and they wanted someone who looked liked her when she was younger. I had a small part in that. This was in fact my first television. This was for ATV in 1965 and was called Henry and Edward and Helen."

How did Lucy get the part of Jenny Richards in Survivors? Had she worked with either Terry Nation or Terry Dudley before? "No, I hadn't. I'm not really sure how I got the part. I was told by my agent that I had an interview with Terry Dudley and I went to meet him and I got the part. I don't know quite why and why they asked to see me or whatever but I'm very glad I did. At the time I was doing Twelfth Night at the Sheffield Crucible. I think Terry Dudley had seen me in a few television plays, I was playing children for a long time. He thought, quite rightly, that it was about time I played a more mature character. This was my first major TV series, although I had done plays and things before and quite a lot of classical stuff on television, but not a series as such. I did, for example a Terry Nation episode of The Avengers in 1967!"

The first six episodes of Survivors were made using the traditional combination on studio work and film inserts. Thereafter Outside Broadcast cameras were used almost exclusively. How did Lucy welcome this change in technique? "Well, I think it had good things and bad things. It was very instant acting without any rehearsals which in some instances was quite tricky, if for example, you had an emotional scene to do. It was very much like filming, as opposed to television recording, and as I say it was fairly instant so one used to run through the lines, maybe rehearse a couple of times and then shoot it. It was very like filming really, only with video. I think where it suffered sometimes was with the quality of the lighting and the sound. They could have been improved, and nowadays they are much better."

Does Lucy have any recollections of the various locations used in Survivors? "I remember that they were always very muddy and wet! At the beginning we had two units going, because the start of the series was delayed due to a BBC strike and they had a transmission date, so we had a two-unit system, just at the beginning.

"For the first episode, the traffic-jam scene was shot in London, where you come off the newly completed Westway, where there's always a traffic-jam. The cars were occupied by perfectly normal people in a traffic queue! My memory is not very good, but I think we shot the other stuff in Cheltenham. It was done fairly late at night, so there wasn't much traffic. I think we were allowed to close a couple of streets."

In a recent interview with TV Zone magazine, Lucy seems to concur with Ian McCulloch in that there was a decline in the quality of the scripts after Terry Nation's involvement with the series had come to an end after the first series. What were Lucy's feelings at the time? "I think that we felt that some of the stories became, certainly in the second series, sort of "baddies" and "goodies" rather than exploring the situation further. Each episode seemed to have the bad guy or bad group of guys in it. That's what we felt; perhaps we were too sensitive."

Does Lucy have any particular favourite story? "No, I don't think I do really. I like the ones at the beginning a lot. The first six episodes, I think. I thought that those scripts were so good and they were good to play. I liked the exploratory nature of the series, the way it turned civilisation back to front. Once we got to do a bit of riding, I enjoyed that stuff too as it became a bit more adventurous then, I wasn't always stuck at home with the babies, as it were."

Lucy is an accomplished horsewoman, something which certainly comes across on Survivors. Does Lucy enjoy the chance to ride while filming? "Yes, I certainly do. I've always ridden, so it was nice to be able to go and do some on film."

In the first episode of series three, Manhunt, Lucy is involved in a funny scene with Denis Lill. She comes riding along brandishing two rifles, she throws one to Denis and knocks him clean off his feet! "Yes, that was quite a tricky shot because I had two horses, I was leading one and riding the other and carrying two rifles! I was asked how many of us there were and I said 'twenty!'. It was fun to do that episode."

How did Lucy feel about the dramatic cast changes at the end of the first season and beginning of the second season? Why did so many leave the series? "I don't know. I think Terry Dudley would know the answer to that if he were still with us. I really don't know what the answer to that is. I think that presumably they wanted to start the next season with a clean sweep and start season two with the characters that they wanted to go on with. I suppose that quite a lot of it was due to actor availability and so on. These things happen in a series, because there is quite a gap between one series and another and actors go off and do other things, or maybe just don't want to go on doing the series, it just depends."

Did the fact of being stuck down in Herefordshire and then Monmouth make life difficult for the cast? "But you see actors are a bit like Gypsies, they'll go wherever the work is. I don't think they suffered at all."

For the second series 'of Survivors the action is centred on the Whitecross community, a couple of miles or so north of Monmouth. In the dead of winter this is a most remote and bleak place. Did Lucy find filming there an unbearable chore? "No, they made us very welcome in that farmhouse and they were frightfully nice to us. They were quite a 'hippie' community anyway so it was great fun being part of that. There were far worse places on location, like muddy fields and no houses to go into for shelter when we were cold and wet. There were no loos either, but you get used to that! The generators we used got stuck in the mud more than once, which was rather tricky as we had to move from location to location quite quickly."

Did the presence of a **BBC** film unit create a lot of tension among the members of the farmhouse community? "I think that happens with location work sometimes. People think it's all going to be fun and glamorous and then they see that the nitty-gritty is not quite what they had expected. I believe the community actually split up and went their different ways afterwards."

Does it not seem quite ironic to Lucy that the very community on which the second series of Survivors was modelled was in the end destroyed by the series? "I think it was quite a volatile community anyway. I'm not sure that it was entirely due to the filming there. It was a very scenic place in which to film, with little intrusion from aeroplanes and the like, which is one of the criteria on which it was chosen. Aircraft or traffic noise for example would have broken the "spell" and would have meant re-shooting."

Staying on the topic of noise, Hampton Court, which was used as the community's base for the second half of the first season, is in fact near to a busy and noisy road. Was noise ever a problem?" I think we could probably get far enough away, especially in the interior. I don't remember a problem with the road, I think we were o.k..

Did Lucy enjoy working in and around Hampton Court? "I didn't like the place very much, no. It was very gloomy and a bit spooky. It was all right when you were outside though."

One of the salient features of Survivors is the mix of very different writing styles. Terry Dudley seemed to surround himself with very highly motivated and creative individuals. Did Lucy enjoy working amidst this creative tension? "I don't really remember a lot of "creative tension", the filming was always rather relaxed. I mean, any kinds or re-writes or worries about the scripts were usually sorted out before we came to film."

But there were some very different philosophies at work. Terry Nation, Terry Dudley, Jack Ronder and Martin Worth all saw things rather differently. "Yes, but Terry Dudley was the producer, so he had the final say. I don't know about the bosses from the **BBC**. But the series did benefit from the different viewpoints, but I don't remember any tension on set, it all seemed very relaxed."

Survivors had a very quick turnaround. Was this a problem? "Yes, we did have a very fast turnaround. We had four and a half days in which to film each episode. For each season we had a six-month turnaround, starting in December and finishing around May or June for the thirteen episodes. It was very hectic once we were into the schedule, but great fun. I'm not sure I could survive under that sort of pressure nowadays, but then you see one was much younger and enjoyed it. Obviously, one would get tired but it was great fun working on a series like that. We were so busy that I only got to see a few of the episodes on television. I think I saw the first lot when they went out, but for seasons two and three we were quite often filming when they went out."

How does Lucy feel about the way in which women were depicted in the post-holocaust world of Survivors? "I don't know really, I've never really thought about it! I am not a feminist in any sort of way. I did

get a bit fed up at being left behind with the children all the time but then they gave me some more stuff to do and that made it more fun. Carolyn was unquestionably the centre of attention in the first series. Originally, I was going to be killed off in episode nine (Law and Order), but luckily they had got some good response from the stuff that I had done so they decided to keep me in, so that was very nice. We were always trying to change the way that women were depicted in the scripts, but the turnaround was so tight that by the time we got the script there was no time. We just didn't have the time to stand around and argue about feminism, although Ian did do a lot of work on the scripts and the directors would listen to him."

Does Lucy remember the second series Martin Worth story, Over the Hills, in which Charles attempts to spark a baby boom in the community, only to find that the women did not wish to be pushed back into a kind of medieval existence? "Oh yes, I think that it was quite a good idea to have something like that, because I'm sure that that sort of conflict would happen. Of course, nobody knows quite what would happen (hopefully we'll never find but!) but I do think that that was a good issue to bring up."

Would Lucy have preferred her character to develop along different lines during the three seasons and did she herself have any input at all? "I did ask at the end of the first series for a bit more action, and they didn't pay much attention to that, but I think she did quite well in the third series. It would have been nice if the character of Jenny had become strong like Abby in the first series, but I think that would have been a big journey to have made although not impossible."

In the first episode of the second series, Birth of a Hope, we see Jenny pregnant with Greg's child. In real life too Lucy had only just given birth to her third son Diggory. Was this a problem for Lucy? "I had to get back into padding and go through it all again about three weeks after he had been born. It was a bit of a nightmare. Diggory then appeared in the series as my young baby Paul. this was horrid because he was so very young. I was worried about him all the time; keeping him clean and away from germs."

The final episode of the series, Power, sees our heroes trying to re-establish hydroelectric power in Scotland. Was this episode actually filmed in Scotland? "Yes, it was. It was in Argyll, somewhere near the Falls of Killin. I very much enjoyed doing that; my family have a house up there so I was able to go and stay with them which was rather jolly. It was lovely. It was done in May, I think, so we had some nice weather."

There have been recent attempts by Ian McCulloch to revive the series for the 1990's. BBC Scotland actually decided that they would like to do it, but Charles Denton at the **BBC** in London declined to take it any further. Does Lucy feel that there is still a place for an updated version of Survivors? "Oh I think that definitely there would be. Obviously not as it was, but I think one could bring it up to date very easily. I think the idea was to start with the people who were left from the last series and see how they were getting on but I would think it would be better to start completely anew really. I don't know really, it all depends."

Would Lucy like to be involved in another series? "I don't know. One would like to see the scripts and the format first to see what the ideas are, but basically the answer is yes, in theory anyway."

Survivors had a very strong self-sufficiency element in it, which was very much in vogue in the 1970's, with books such as Self Sufficiency by the Seymours, and a series called The Good Life was also more or less co-eval with Survivors. Would this be difficult to do today? "I don't know. I suspect it would be harder to do today because it isn't so fashionable now, although the actual issues raised are probably more relevant today than they were twenty years ago."

Does Lucy remember any funny incidents which happened while filming? "Well, that's a tricky question! Perhaps in the first season episode Starvation, when Carolyn and I were trying to plough a stretch of land. We laughed a lot at that, in fact I think we were probably out of control! Yes, that was fun. I missed Carolyn not being in the other series because she was a great giggler as well and it was always good to have her around. It was all so long ago. Watching a few episodes recently that have been going out on UK Gold, there are some scenes that I don't remember doing at all. I had completely forgotten that we ever had a balloon in the series, for example! Because we did them all in such a rush, there was a sort of instant memory for the lines; it's not like a play that you do for weeks and weeks."

Has the fact of being one of the leading players in Survivors meant that Lucy has been typecast? "I don't think so. I suspect that people think of you as that person for some time and if you can find a part that is steering away from that it's quite good to get that different angle. I don't recall finding it difficult to get other work when the series had finished. I went on to do other things. I was quite lucky in that way."

How then does Lucy, twenty years on, feel about having been involved in what must surely be one of the most mature and thought provoking series ever to be made by the BBC? "It was a happy time for me. It was fun. It's always fun working on a series, because you're with the same group of people most of the time and you develop a sort of family feeling together and you have visiting actors coming in to do parts and so it's a very nice feeling. We had a lot of good actors coming in. We had Patrick Troughton, Roy

Marsden, Kevin McNally, Peter Bowles of course, who was in the first episode, Ian Cuthbertson too, in the last episode."

bid Lucy have any preferences regarding which director she would rather work with? "Pennant Roberts I was particularly fond of and I've worked with him quite a lot since. I worked with him in 1993 in Wycliffe which was very nice."

Does the present blandness of British TV strike Lucy as sad when contrasted with the unique character of Survivors ? "Yes, I think that there are some good things nowadays, but you have to search really hard to find them. I'm not sure that you would be able to do something like the Survivors we did nowadays. They are so strict about what people can and can't do that I think it would be difficult to get it off the ground today. Survivors was not very expensive, but whether you would