

**Wanderings**  
**Introduction to series three**  
**By Kevin Marshall.**

Directors:  
**Peter Jeffries**  
**George Spenton-Foster**  
**Tristan de Vere Coe**

Manhunt  
 Law of the Jungle  
 The Enemy  
 The Last Laugh

A Little Learning  
 Bridgehead  
 The Peacemaker  
 Power

Mad Dog  
 Sparks  
 Long Live the King

**Terence Dudley**  
 Reunion

Writers:  
**Martin Worth**  
 Law of the Jungle  
 Bridgehead  
 Long Live the King  
 Power

**Roger Parkes**  
 The Peacemaker  
 Sparks  
 The Enemy

**Ian McCulloch**  
 A Little Learning The Last Laugh

**Don Shaw**  
 Mad Dog  
 Reunion

**Terence Dudley**  
 Manhunt

The third and what would prove to be the final series of Survivors sees yet another dramatic change in emphasis. The sub-plot running through the series is Greg's unification of the scattered remnants into a unified whole, complete with trade and some kind of industry, and the frantic yet vain efforts of Charles et al to locate him. Only the Norwegian Agnes seems to have the knack of catching up with Greg, but that's another story...

The fact that Greg was no longer on the scene had far-reaching consequences. The characters left their comfortable base and seemed to spend most of the time galloping round the British countryside posing the question, "Where's Greg?" There was little coherence or direction left to the series as it began to break apart at the seams. As Tony Virgo says in his interview, in any drama series it is imperative to allow change and evolution in order to keep up the momentum and dynamism, but in the case of Survivors the changes had rendered the series pointless. Would Charles, Jenny and Hubert really have been so foolish and dim-witted as to abandon all their responsibilities at home, just to find Greg? And if Greg was not having an affair with the beautiful Agnes, why didn't he make a proper attempt to get back home? The fact that only Agnes seemed capable of finding Greg was quite absurd. Yet Agnes regularly crops up with both the community and Greg, as if she were being used to relay messages between the two. It would have made much more sense if Agnes had indeed been a femme fatale. Instead, the audience is expected to believe that Greg can spend a year away with this woman, away from his wife Jenny and child Paul, all in the name of putting Britain back onto its feet. It is no wonder that the actress cast to play Agnes, Anna Pitt, spent most of her time wondering what on earth was going on. The viewer is presented with a complete

metamorphosis (almost as striking as that of Caligula, who woke up one morning to find out that he was now a god) of Agnes in *Long Live the King*, in which she is transformed beyond recognition into a gun-toting, cleavage-showing fascist-style leader, complete with leather boots Diana Rig, eat your heart out). It would have been more understandable and sensible if this image of Agnes had been presented much earlier on.

### **Momentum**

As Martin Worth remarks in his interview, Terry Dudley made the mistake, as he had done on *The Regiment*, of moving *Survivors* on too quickly. In the end, *Survivors* built up so much momentum, that once electrical power had been restored in Martin Worth's *Power*, the series was effectively left with no where to go. There were, however, some very positive aspects to the series. Life at the farm in series two had become far too comfortable, rendering *Survivors* almost soap like. There is no doubt that it certainly needed a grittier, harsher look. As many have commented in their interviews, the cameras, which used videotape, gave the series an almost idyllic look. This was remedied to a large extent by director Peter Jefferies, who found a way of 'tweaking' the colours to obtain a much grittier look. He also decided that the actors should look much scruffier; we had witnessed, after all, the end of civilisation!

### **Highlights**

The nine originally commissioned episodes fell short of the thirteen required for the series. The four remaining episodes were commissioned and were ready before the third series went into production and fitted well into the transmission sequence. Two were by Ian McCulloch (*A Little Learning* and *The Last Laugh*) and two by Don Shaw (*Mad Dog* and *Reunion*). For the viewer this was indeed fortunate, as *The Last Laugh* and *Mad Dog* are two of the finest pieces of writing in the whole series, not withstanding the good points of *Manhunt* and *Law of the jungle*. The first Ian McCulloch story, *A Little Learning*, written with Lucy Fleming's character in mind, proved to be a disappointment. *Mad Dog* is a corker of a story, very much in the action-adventure style so beloved of Ian McCulloch and Terry Nation. Indeed, Don Shaw wrote the script with Ian in mind, but relations between Ian and the producer were so strained over his departure that the lead went to Denis Lill. Denis made a magnificent job of it, putting in one of his finest ever performances. *Mad Dog* achieved some notoriety at the time for its depiction of rabies. *Mad Dog* was certainly one of Denis Lill's favourite stories, and was the favourite of director Tristan de Vere Cole. *Mad Dog* deals with fear and prejudice. The fear is of disease and an agonising death. The prejudice is the way in which Fenton and Charles were treated, the latter being hunted down as if he himself were a rabid dog. *Mad Dog* was shot in winter time, in the most atrocious arctic conditions. Because cameras and other vital pieces of equipment kept freezing up, it was not possible to keep to the original schedule and a re-mount of certain scenes had to be done (see interview with Tristan de Vere Cole for more details). This delay meant that a Roger Parkes story (title unknown, but perhaps *Bleak Start*) had to be scrapped, and this explains why the third series only ran to twelve instead of thirteen episodes.

In *The Last Laugh*, the final high point of *Survivors*, Ian McCulloch effectively kills his character off, after an absence of seven episodes, having him contract some kind of smallpox-like disease. The story shows the shadowy depths to which even noble and righteous individuals like Greg may sink. Better than most episodes of *Survivors*, *The Last Laugh* conjures up a world so dismal, bleak and gloomy that one is almost driven to depression.

Don Shaw's *Reunion*, a beautifully told story, is a watershed, not only in that John is reunited with his mother, but that Charles realises that his community at Challoner is but a staging post, and that they and those still remaining at Whitecross should all move to join up with Sloton Spencer. Thus we can see the group slowing wending their way up through England and north to Scotland

*Survivors* reaches what would have been a natural conclusion in episode eleven, Martin Worth's *Long Live the King*, directed by Tristan de Vere Cole, in which Greg's moral authority over the new 'Nation' was becoming ever apparent. The episode ends with the Union Jack being hoisted over the camp, with the letters GP in the middle, thus adding insult to injury to Denis Lill, who had been assured that he was the star of the show.

This would have been an apt point to end the series. But we have to wait till Martin Worth's *Power*, in which, as the title suggests, electrical power is finally restored. In many ways *Power* actually negates and scuppers the whole philosophy behind the series. I recall watching this episode with utter dismay back in 1977. *Survivors* should not have been about switching the power back on, but how people struggled without it.

In all the effort and zeal to unite the settlements of Britain and restore electricity, the character of Jenny is often forgotten, surely one of the great missed opportunities of *Survivors*. In fact, Lucy Fleming was the only regular to survive right through to the end. After being abandoned by Greg she is distressed,

and realises deep down that she may never see him again. This should have been a great opportunity for her to grow and mature and perhaps even have become a leader-figure, rather like Abby had been. Although it is true that she often leaves baby Paul at home while gallivanting around the countryside after Greg, her only aim in life seems to be re-united with her man again. She still shows the fighting spirit of the first series, but is never allowed to compete with Charles. As eloquently expressed by Neil Alsop in Timescreen magazine, No.10, 1986, 'So Jenny, displaying no significant qualities of leadership, even if Greg had lived to become King, would not have made as fitting a Queen for him as Agnes.'

What of a fourth series? Ian McCulloch did present a plan to the BBC whereby Britain was invaded by some African country which had escaped the worst of the plague; a sort of colonialism in reverse. In the end the BBC decided that the schema was too racist and dropped it. There was also the plan whereby a re-fitted North sea ferry would have been used to re-establish trading links with Norway, but in the end they were both considered too costly and dropped. Survivors had by now drifted very far indeed from Terry Nation's original premise.

In 1993, BBC Scotland expressed the desire to produce Survivors as a major drama production for 1994. The idea would have been to see how our heroes were faring twenty years on. This was the work of Ian McCulloch, who has not only written a pilot episode but outlines of a further six or more stories. Unfortunately, the BBC have decided not to pursue the project any further. With the present import of much foreign material, it is to be hoped that the BBC will once again be a medium in which talented writers can explore new and interesting ideas.