

Terence Williams (Director).

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Terence Williams was involved throughout the first and second series of Survivors, and was one of those brought in for the first batch of stories. He was one of the most well liked and respected of the directors on the series.

What brought Terry into directing? "I started by going to Drama School and Theatre Club, accompanying my sister who was a singer studying acting. I was attempting a degree course in Physics and Chemistry, after National Service in the Air Force. I found myself spending so much time and energy doing shows that I neglected my degree course. I eventually decided that the Theatre was much more appealing so I took my first job in the professional Theatre in the Dundee Repertory Theatre as Stage Manager then Stage Director and part-time director at the York Citizens Theatre trust, where I met my wife Kate, who was Scenic Artist. In 1956 I joined the BBC as a 'Holiday Relief Assistant Floor Manager - (Don't think you are going to stay longer than three months, because you are not!)' I stayed with the RBC for just over ten years, becoming a Floor Manager, Production Manager and Director/Producer. In those days there was a great demand for people with film or theatre skills because of the demand from the new 'TV companies being formed. Four years after joining the BBC I went on the Directors Course and a year later was directing on the Maigret series. I went on to direct Z Cars, a weekly live fifty minute series, followed by a long string of Drama series in the 1960's."

How did Terry become involved in Survivors? "I left the BBC in 1968 to join Yorkshire Television. I produced Gazette, Hadleigh, Parkin's Patch, and set up Emmerdale Farm before leaving and freelancing for the BBC and many 'TV companies. In the mid 1970's I went into Independent Production with three other colleagues. We ran this company for four years at a time when there was very much less opportunity than now for Independents. We survived the three-day week but eventually decided that the returns were too small for the large outlay of time, and I returned to freelance work. My previous agent told me that Terry Dudley was about to produce this interesting series, and Terry invited me to come and have a chat. He asked me to join him - that's how it happened."

Had Terry worked with Terry Dudley before? "No, but I knew him very well, because he was one of my fellow producers and directors at the BBC when I had worked there previously."

What were Terry's thoughts on the initial concept of Survivors? "It was very different, gripping. Even though television was very diverse in those days it was a great change from much of the bread and butter programming we were doing at the time. I was very enthusiastic about the idea."

Some people however have criticised Survivors, saying that it was little more than a serious version of The Good Life. "No. The objectives were very different, Survivors was a serious piece of Television drama based on an imaginative idea."

Why does Terry think that Survivors has never been repeated on terrestrial television? "I've no idea at all! The whole ethos of repeats is extraordinary. At one time repeats were a dirty word. Now it is a perfectly respectable ploy, especially as it helps spread the lam' a bit further. We should remember that channel 2 was in its infancy, and channel 4 wasn't in existence. Viewer choice was limited and programmes tended to go out of fashion. I suppose nowadays it needs a decision maker influenced by the series in their youth who might say 'Let's put this on again'. Decision making in television is extremely complex."

How does Terry feel about the direction the series took during the two seasons in which he was involved? "It was a great idea, but successful as it was, I don't think it was totally exploited. In terms of how people would be forced to band together and how they, and outsiders would be exploited, it was absolutely realistic. All the good qualities of human beings were shown to emerge, as well as bad qualities like greed and desire for power. That was fine. I felt there was a tendency to revert to a Middle-Ages type of philosophy in which there was a disregard for the 20th century technology that existed at the time of the disaster. I suppose we all had our own individual ideas about what we would do in similar circumstances, but I remember saying to Terry (Dudley) that I thought we should exploit all the modern technology around us. There is after all a huge history of invention up to that time. It would have been interesting to see what was no longer relevant. I felt sure that a new form of currency would be established, perhaps Calor Gas cylinders because they would be highly prized. Power in close proximity to the community was dealt with well, when Greg initiated the repair of the old water mill. People had to band together and try to stay in one place where they could attempt to live in comfort and safety. The irony of that situation is that as they

increased their own comfort and survival chances, they also increased the threat from others less successful, who would try to seize it from them. This aspect was well developed."

His first episode was Terry Nation's *Gone Away*. Does Terry have any recollections of this? "This was shot around Hereford, my own home city. I think it worked quite well. It had a looter strung up in the supermarket, tough stuff really."

His second episode was *Garland's War*, another Terry Nation story. "This was shot at Brockhampton Court, near Ross-on-Wyc. I like that episode. I thought it was a smashing story. It was the story where Abby and Jimmy Garland met. A tender interlude amongst so much turmoil."

Carolyn Seymour has already said that her strong character created problems for her. Did Terry find her difficult to work with? "Carolyn was wonderfully professional. I remember an incident in *Gone Away* (Hole in the wall bridge). The flood waters were rising threatening a very difficult scene between Carolyn and Lucy Fleming. The scene was scheduled for the following day but there was no way we could have done it the next day as large lumps of trees were being carried down the rising waters and were bouncing off the bridge where we had set the scene. 'Look Carolyn', I said, 'we are not going to get near this bridge tomorrow. if I ask you to learn your big scene in the lunch break would you and Lucy do it this afternoon?' There was a very big pause before she asked me if I was joking, but when I pointed out the state of the river, and explained how important the location was, she said 'OK, I'll have a go at it'. Over lunch she and Lucy worked at the scene. I really took my hat off to both of them."

One of the most charismatic in that first season was Talfryn Thomas, who gave the impression of at times making up the lines as he went along! "No, he didn't! Perhaps a certain amount of 'ad-libbing'. He certainly was a bit OTT at times accentuated by that lovely old Welsh lilt. I have fond memories of using Talfryn in an episode of *Z Cars* some years before. He was one of three bank robbers about to be trapped by the police. We shot a scene in a car on film inserted into the live studio transmission. Talf was as usual way over the top, and despite me asking him to pull it down, the final performance was a bit theatrical. When he saw it in the studio he tracked me down, and said 'Oh boyo, I see what you mean, can you do anything?' I pointed out to him that the film was shot and edited, and the programme was transmitted live next day. He was so worried, I agreed to insert from the studio that part of the film which was in the car, and gave most offence. It was one of the most hair-raising experiences of my career to have a live performance from the studio floor being transmitted as the film running in parallel. Both were identical except for a rather larger than live performance from Talf being ignored in favour of a considered one. After the show, he asked if I had managed, and showed such relief when I assured him I had, that it seemed worth while. I did say to him that next time if he didn't do as I asked I would kick him in a very tender place! When we were working on *Survivors* I only once had to whisper to him very softly "Goolies!" He was a real character, and only died a short while ago. It was a pity his character had to be killed off, but in the context of desperate survival mixed with great fear there are bound to be casualties. The episode in which he killed the girl, *Law and Order*, was first class. Very well acted and directed. You could smell the fear. Those type of issues were dealt with well in this series."

Terry's final story in the first series was yet another Terry Nation story, *Something of Value*. "Now that, technically, was the most difficult to do. You should remember that we were dealing with Outside Broadcast cameras, which were not that lightweight. True, we got what we were promised, the latest and lightest cameras, but everything was housed in a very large OB Vehicle. When I was at Yorkshire TV, a company from Germany demonstrated a two camera chain in a Volkswagen van, together with all the control gear and a vision mixer. This was truly lightweight. Unfortunately, the BBC seemed to think in terms of horse-racing and though camera size was diminishing, vans were getting bigger and bigger! They had everything in the van! Sound mixing, vision mixing, camera control, to say nothing of a large video recorder and all the staff to operate this machinery. The truck was so big, we found ourselves barred from many superb locations because we could not find a place close enough to park. In *Something of Value* most of the action centred round the capture of a half full petrol tanker by a trio of desperate opportunists. Much of the time either they, or Greg, were driving it through the deserted countryside. To achieve this, and shoot inside the cab, we had to lay out maximum lengths of cable as the cameras were umbilically linked to the van and to the recorder. Depicting a runaway tanker careering downhill out of control with this restriction, was a hugely difficult exercise. Even the stake out in the barn was far from simple, because shot as it was in high summer, the gloom of the interior had to be strongly lit to compensate high contrast outside. Overall, I was not too satisfied with this episode as, apart from these restrictions, I felt it could have addressed the main issues better."

Does Terry feel that the series looked too idyllic and that it would have looked better had it been done on film? "Lots of people say this about film. I have worked in both film and video and I don't go along with this thinking that film is superior to video. Film cameras are certainly more portable -at the moment! Video can be made to look like film which has a greater contrast range, by the use of filters which in turn require a greater aperture and a reduction in the field of focus. The material of video is cheaper than film, it is less

mobile and the actual post production cost can be less. Eventually, I suppose everything will be shot on video."

How did Terry feel about the change from Hampton Court in the first series to Callow Hill in the second? "Callow Hill is a strange place. I think the move in story terms was sensible. In practical terms it was necessary, as Hampton Court was no longer available. As a survival location it made sense. A small vulnerable community were in an isolated yet defensible place. In practical terms it was traumatic in the extreme for the inhabitants. The descent upon their previous rural calm of a complete BBC OB crew and actors, knocked them for six. Many lives and relationships were changed for ever by this encounter. On the last day of the shoot for the final episode, we finished just before lunch, and had an impromptu sing song under the trees. Ian McCulloch and Steven Tate sang a calypso which they had written, depicting the characters that lived in and around Callow Hill which itself was a family orientated community."

The second series episode Lights of London I, sees a return to the rat infested horrors of a rat-infested capital city, where only about five hundred survivors were left. "I enjoyed that episode. Viewers would obviously want to know what would happen in a mayor city after the Plague. The main difficulty was showing the neglect. Easy to describe but impossible to recreate satisfactorily. One of our greatest problems was showing the extent of the vermin epidemic. There were two types of rat available to us, the tame rat, so docile that it couldn't move, and the wild rat, so fast and with such collective intelligence than it was impossible to keep them in one spot. I think the two Lights of London episodes were successful because they addressed so many issues, not the least of which was the dilemma in which Ruth, the community doctor, found herself caught between the loyalty to her group and her dedication as a doctor."

Terry's second story of this series was Face of the Tiger, by Don Shaw. This story has a very emotional scene in the farmhouse kitchen, where Alistair McFadden (played by John Line) gives a long speech at which some people actually had tears in their eyes, and which produced spontaneous applause by all present. "Yes indeed. There was a moment when everybody was gulping. We all had lumps in our throats. He was absolutely terrific, so moving. The story was written so well by Don Shaw."

A beautifully told story was Parasites by Roger Marshall. It had marvellous performances by Kevin McNally, Roy Herrick and Brian Grellis. "Very good indeed. Survivors, though desperate at times, because of the isolation of the people involved took place at a fairly relaxed pace. This enabled some of the more 'pastoral' stories to develop in their own time. When Delia Paton (Mina) met Patrick Troughton (John Millen) as he led his horse-drawn barge along the canal, they were only an hour's walk away from the community. Following the course of the canal, he could not get there until the next day. When it did arrive, two very different characters were in charge, and there was no sign of the original owner. Both Kevin McNally, who was evil personified, and Brian Grellis turned in memorable performances."

Terry's final story was New World by Martin Worth. Does Terry have any memories of this? "Oh yes. I didn't get to go up in the balloon! The main spine of the story as I recall it concerned a Norwegian girl who arrived amongst the community in a hot-air balloon, an inventive device dreamt up by the writer to allow low-tech travel between communities, leading to the spread of knowledge throughout the survivors. It illustrated very well the need to communicate with other groups at the same time underlining the vulnerability of everyone in a grossly depleted society where law and order have not yet been established. I really thought I was about to achieve a lifetime ambition and achieve a trip in a hot-air balloon after we had finished shooting. Unfortunately I had some more shooting to direct, and by the time I had finished it was either too dark or too windy to take off!"

Why didn't Terry direct any of the third series? "I seem to recall that I next went to Scotland for a brief spell, followed by "Aphrodite Inheritance" by Michael J. Bird. I was certainly working. Perhaps Terry (Dudley) thought it a good idea to bring in new blood. Like an actor, a director is the interpreter of the writers work, but brings to this a great degree of imagination and original thinking. After a time on the same series, you are aware of repetition. People new to the task perhaps think more freely."

Does Terry become emotionally involved in the story he is directing? "You must never become so emotionally involved that you lose your objectivity. That way we will fail to tell the story completely. You must be fired up by enthusiasm. This gives you the necessary energy to stick to what is a long, hard, complex but in the end most rewarding task."

How did Terry get on with the two children in the series, Tanya Ronder and Stephen Dudley? "I thought Tanya was delightful and very talented. She has those wonderful big eyes - she was a natural. Stephen got on with it and did what he had to do well. It could not have been that easy for him as the Producer's son. I found the best way to deal with the children was to give them some time to themselves, however much the pressures of the schedule crowded in. They responded if I was able to sit down on the stairs with them and just quietly talk them through. The rest of the cast were also most supportive and

helpful to them. There are very stringent Local Authority Rules which protect the child at work. They have to be specially licensed and their hours are very strictly curtailed. They also must be provided with tutors and need to complete a set amount of schooling each week. In the Lights of London I my own daughter Paula played Maisie when she was 10 years old."

Does Terry have any favourite story? "Garland's War, I think. I liked that story a great deal. It had toughness as Jimmy Garland fought to reclaim his house and land, but it was also a tender interlude in which Abby took stock of herself, and accepted the need for another human being. It was a very moving story."

How does Survivors compare with the current fare on television? "Perhaps I am disillusioned, but I feel there is

little innovation on television at the moment. It is all rather formula driven. Survivors seemed to be a whole different ball game. We had not seen anything like it before. I doubt that those who make the decisions now would be prepared to take chances like that. In the days of Survivors the resources available at the BBC were used with great economy. Partly because of the sheer volume of Drama, Light entertainment, Children's broadcasting etc, and also by good management and decision making. Nowadays the lines of communication have got so stretched that any idea has to be scrutinised at several levels, budgeted (several times), screwed down, re-budgeted. Gone over again and again, reassessed etc. etc. A hugely wasteful process."

If Terry could remake his episodes today, would he make any changes? "I certainly wouldn't change Garland's War at all. I think I would be inclined to leave the others as they were. I enjoyed Survivors because generally the stories were about a handful of people in an extreme situation. At the same time, they had learnt to accept the situation they found themselves in, and were surprised and grateful to escape the fate that the majority of their fellows had suffered. Apart from moments of crisis the rest of life could revert to the pace and rhythm of the seasons upon which they now found themselves dependent. Writers were given the opportunity of developing scenes and relationships with people stripped of the veneer of modern civilisation. Most of them rose to that challenge. I hope that we, the directors, played our part to their and the viewers' satisfaction."