All sorts of characters come

to life on special school day

Chernobyl disaster victims.

lavatory at lunch time.

Everyone could hear Alice Greener and her horse, com-

plete with bells, as they clip-

clopped their way to Banbury

Cross. There were characters

from Jack and the Beanstalk,

Jungle Book, Toy Story and

don as the Knave of Hearts,

Bo Peep and Laurence Wilcox

One of the biggest cheers of

the day was for head teacher

Mrs Pat Barker who was

dressed from head to toe in

green as Teletubby Dipsy.

## In the **Spotlight** this week:

### **Gordon Duffy**

TV, theatre and film actor

Gordon Duffy has had a successful acting career after training in London and Paris. He now lives in Barnard Castle while teaching performing arts and studying for a masters degree. He means to go back to full time acting in a few years' time and is likely to be seen regularly on television once more. He has had interesting roles in a number of popular TV series and in commercials as well as doing a lot of theatre and film work.

He was appearing in a pantomime in Teesdale when he met Janice McGhie, who is now his wife. The couple have linked their names to become the Duffy-McGhie family. Janice, well known for her work in running Kirklands day nursery, has a son and daughter, Holly 19 and Ben 18. Gordon and Janice have two sons, Ralph 8 and George 3.

Gordon says he is happy to be at home while the boys are growing up, rather than touring with stage plays or filming on location, but he is also looking forward to acting again.

# Farmer showed me how to handle a sheep for my role in Heartbeat

You have appeared in quite a few series on television?

of other shows.

ressed when they see you on and was able to turn it over. the screen?

Not all of them - my mother wants me to be in Coronation Street and won't be impressed unless I get a part in it.

play in Emmerdale?

lars. I enjoyed being in that pro- did A levels. gramme for nine weeks.

How did you get on with the regulars in the cast?

They are all fairly nice people. It was good to work with them.

were you in Heartbeat? I was a farmer in that for a few weeks. The storyline around that time was about a beast on the moors. When I went for the part I took a copy of the Mercury with in Teesdale.

Did that help you? about the kind of story that was act physically rather than standcoming up in the programme. I ing making speeches. don't know if it helped but I got Did you study full tim

the part, which I enjoyed. Did you do any preparation for your farmer role?

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I've been in Emmerdale, All back. A farmer at Bowes showed and doing laundry, Creatures Great and Small, Stay me how to do that. When that Lucky. Heartbeat and a number incident came during the filming I got hold of the sheep - which Your relatives must be imp- was made up with fake blood -

> Everyone was quite impressed. When did you start as a acting jobs there? professional actor?

was 12. That was in Waiting for What character did you Godot in the Little Theatre Guild thing like that on my CV. in Birmingham. I took turns in I was a nasty poacher who the role with another boy. After and a search for work? shot the son of one of the regu- that I went back to school until I

And following that?

North London for three years. Have any of the other stu-What sort of character dents there at the time made it in a big way?

> One of them was Simon Bowman, who has taken the lead in a for Channel 4 about the Savoy number of musicals.

What came next for you? a story about some creature study at the Jacques Le Coq ment. But the makers were not starring Cheri Lunghi. It was which had been attacking sheep mime school in the south of the city. It involved such things as and the series was dropped. walking against the wind. I was It showed I knew something mainly interested in learning to it before it was shelved?

In the show I had to handle an teaching English as a foreign injured sheep and turn it onto its language, working as a waiter

hectic time for you?

It was fairly hand to mouth but it was interesting being able to study and work in Paris.

I got my first paid part when I socks and another for camping where I was involved with a very gear. It was good to have some- erratic sheep.

I went to the Mount View and Juliet. I also did another good experience. Theatre School at Crouch End in tour. In between times I worked in a restaurant as a waiter and well known actors?

break on television?

That was a pilot programme arrest Dennis in one scene. Hotel. It was all about trainee other series? chefs, and I played the part of I went for a part in the Chan-I went to Paris for two years to one trainee in the salmon depart- nel 4 series The Manageress quite sure where they were going about the first woman boss of a

was not wasted. If you are doing On the first day I suffered a something like that it can lead to leg muscle injury and was car-I could not afford to do that. I something else. Your agent can ried off and that was me out of usually attended morning class- send out details about you say- the series. I was sorry because es and did jobs in the afternoon - ing, "Soon to be seen in .



Gordon Duffy: many good television roles behind him

What came after that?

I was in a number of adverts you known.

Your next television show? All Creatures Great and Were you able to land any Small. I was Alan the auctioneer in some episodes. Some of the I did some TV adverts, one for filming was done at Leyburn,

Did you make friends with Then it was back to Britain any of the stars of the series? The actors like Christopher I was taken on fairly soon by a Timothy and Robert Hardy were touring company called Red Shift all perfectly pleasant and good to and went on tour with Romeo work with. Shows like that are a

Any other meetings with

I was PC Abrahams in Stay What was your first major Lucky with Jan Francis and Dennis Waterman. I had to

Did you audition for any

league football team. I was cho-How long did you spend on sen as one of the 18 players in her squad.

That took eight weeks. But it Did you enjoy the role?

the show went fairly well. I was

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Screened Top Soil.

particularly looking forward to the role because I had a bit of Budweiser beer, Courage Best experience as a footballer. They It must have been a fairly Bitter and John Smiths. Adverts invited me back for a second Fireman Sam. Nursery rhyme pay well and they also help to get series but I was doing something | characters included Ross Lanelse by then. What was your footballing | Ashleigh Kettlewell as Little

background?

I was on the books of Grimsby as The Grand Old Duke of Town as a 15 year old schoolboy York. at the time Lawrie McMenemy was manager. I was a left back and played in the club's boys' team. But I was never going to be good enough to become a professional player.

Have you ever been in a film for the cinema?

I've been in a couiple of movies. One was Invitation to the Wedding with John Gielgud and Ralph Richardson. They both gave some helpful advice to the younger actors but it was a really awful film. I played an American footballer.

It didn't do well at the box

It was hardly shown at all before being released for TV. My next film wasn't a lot better. It was an American one, Lords of Discipline. I was a GI recruit. It gave you a tough time?

It meant getting up at 4.30am for six weeks and going round and round an assault course, getting covered in mud.

How did you come to end up in Teesdale?

did several shows for the Durham Theatre Company. I came to Barnard Castle as the Pirate King in a pantomime and met Janice, who was in the audience. We got talking afterwards, and before very long I made my nome here.

What are you doing now? Teaching performing arts on Teesside and studying for a masters degree. I'm doing this so I can spend time at home with my children while they are growing up, and then I mean to go back to

full time acting. What made you decide on

this change? I toured all over the country for six months with Wuthering Heights. I remember being in Southampton on a Saturday night and dashing home for one day before going off somewhere else. I wasn't getting much time

with the children.

Any other factors? I was in for a part in a commercial for a type of rice. If I had got it there would have been two weeks of filming in South Africa and a £15,000 fee. I was called to London five times and it cost me

about £700 but I didn't get it. Do actors spend a lot of fruitless time on auditions?

On average you get one job out of 12 auditions, and 88% of actors are out of work at any time. But you still want to go back to it full time?

I still enjoy some acting work as well as teaching. When I'm ready for more parts again I'll let my agents know. I think I'll be a better actor in future. It's one of those jobs in which you can get better as you get older. I would like to run my own company at some point, taking shows into village halls and small theatres.

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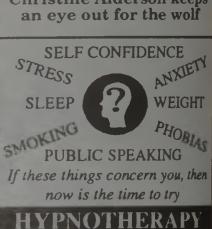
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Laurence Wilcox and Ross Landon



an eye out for the wolf



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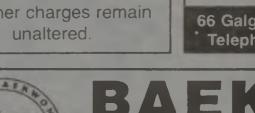
Lyndon Greener as Woody

from Toy Story

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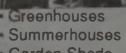
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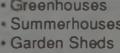
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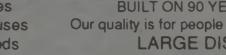
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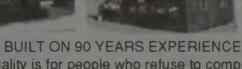


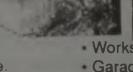


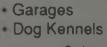




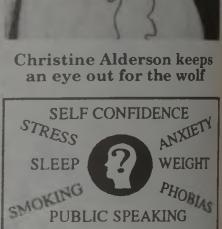








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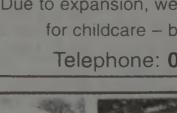
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