

A HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL READERS

PHILIP BATES

6 OBJECTS

of DR. WHO

7d



FREE TRANSFERS!



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6 Festive Objects of Dr Who

You yawn, your eyelids droop, and you find yourself in a room.

A bright room, dazzling bright. It's snowing, in fact, and the shocking white of the walls, of the flakes, of the air stings your eyes. Somewhere in the distance there are bells chiming a spirited tune. It's chilly, the cold snapping at your cheeks, but you're wearing gloves, a question mark jumper, some Tom Baker underpants, and a knitted hat with a blue box on it.

And so, this is Christmas.

You see a leaflet on the floor, flapping in the impossible wind but trapped underneath your foot. It reads:

WELCOME TO THE SS SHAWCRAFT.

SPECIAL EVENT, THIS MILLENNIUM ONLY: THE MUSEUM OF *DOCTOR WHO*, THE SUCCESSFUL BBC FRANCHISE AND ITS TIME LORD PROTAGONIST/ANTAGONIST/ONCOMING STORM/JELLY BABY ENTHUSIAST (delete according to racial, religious, and individual beliefs). BOOK TICKETS IN ADVANCE/AFTER EVENT (ACCORDING TO LOCALISED FOURTH DIMENSIONAL LIMITATIONS).

Our award-winning on-site café is open all day, every day (except bank holidays, during the transit

of Venus, and whenever there's a full moon on the third Sunday of a month). Fish fingers and custard available at advanced request.

Hmm, yes, you've heard about this place. A spaceship that hosts a collection all about the Time Lord known as the Doctor. TripAdvisor lists it as #194 of 230 things to do near the quasar ULAS J1342+0928. As such, time works differently here. The ship impossibly orbits a supermassive black hole, so while this exhibition covers the history of *Doctor Who*, it does so in fluctuations; the fabric of space-time warps, melding eras together with unexpected results.

But this isn't the full exhibit, is it? This is literally a room.

You go up to one wall. A second. The third. And then —

Ah, this one has a little sign on it. You bend in closer. It reads:

1. The Fourth Wall.

The Doctor famously broke the fourth wall in *The Feast of Steven*, *Doctor Who*'s first proper Christmas episode, part of *The Daleks' Master Plan*. William Hartnell turned to the camera and said, 'A happy Christmas to all of you at home.'

But that wasn't the first time *Doctor Who* broke the fourth wall, and it certainly wasn't the last either.

Aside from awkward glances to camera after a line fluff or similar, the first proper acknowledgement of the audience came at the cliffhanger of *The Aztecs: Part One*, an iconic scene in which Tlotoxl, High Priest of Sacrifice, realises that Barbara is a false god and plans her downfall, in what is essentially a soliloquy – a term largely associated with the theatre. The theatre is also where we get breaking the fourth wall from: on a small stage, where characters need to speak their thoughts aloud without others hearing, the audience becomes their confidant, as someone in the play wrestles loose from their own world and momentarily steps into ours. Anyone who studied English at school or college will find it hard to separate the idea of soliloquies and fourth walls from the work of William Shakespeare: the Bard used the technique a lot, not solely to make us privy to the intentions of his leads but also to create further intimacy in an already intimate setting.

"Breaking the fourth wall", the term, was introduced much later, however. It's commonly

attributed to the French philosopher and dramatist Denis Diderot, who, in 1758, extolled the idea of putting up an invisible barrier between the audience and the three walls of the play. The concept is as fitting for TV and film as it is for theatre, but can also apply to other forms of media, including novels (Stephen King's *The Dark Tower* series), animation (*The Simpsons*), radio (*Monty Python's Flying Circus*), and comic books (She-Hulk, Deadpool). Even Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* does it.

Nonetheless, there's an argument that soliloquies, asides, and choruses shouldn't be considered breaking the fourth wall. There's surely an ambiguity in Tlooxl's speech: yes, he is looking directly at the camera, but if you're uneasy about the idea of *Doctor Who*'s world acknowledging itself as fictitious, you can maintain that he's simply talking to himself and that the non-existent camera just happens to be there at the time.

In that sense, *The Feast of Steven* includes the only explicit reference to the audience itself, although a couple of other instances (which we'll come back to) come close; and that hasn't stopped fans trying to explain away the fourth wall break either. Seeing as the Space-Time Visualiser had been introduced the previous season, you could, for instance, imagine that the Doctor is addressing anyone, including another version of himself, tuning in through the handy device.

Doctor Who in the 1960s could be compared to

theatre, in that many episodes were recorded as-live, i.e. with few recording breaks and reshoots only under extreme circumstances. Saying that, the cast came close to it again until the Fourth Doctor era, most notably in *The Invasion of Time*, when the Time Lord says to camera (or to himself) that ‘Even the sonic screwdriver’s not going to get me out of this one.’

The ambiguity between breaking the fourth wall and simply making knowing asides is leaned on a few times in the series. In *The Night of the Doctor*, the Eighth Doctor says that he’s a Doctor, ‘but probably not the one you’re expecting’, alluding to the fact that viewers weren’t aware that Paul McGann would be back for the fiftieth anniversary. Oswin Oswald looks to camera in *Asylum of the Daleks* and says to us and to the Doctor, ‘Run, you clever boy. And remember,’ essentially promising the audience that we’ll see her again. And *Remembrance of the Daleks* cheekily shows a TV teasing ‘a new sci-fi series called *Do—*’ before Ace turns it off.

The Doctor who most frequently breaks the fourth wall, however, is the Twelfth. *Deep Breath* sets the agenda perfectly, with Peter Capaldi looking directly to camera after the Half-Face Man falls/is pushed from a great height onto the Big Ben clock tower. (“100% rebel Time Lord” said the Twelfth Doctor promotional blurb, a curious phrase that might as well have flashed up on screen at this point too.)

In *Heaven Sent*, the Doctor is effectively talking to himself for much of the episode, but he serves as a narrator to events as he has no one to actually explain anything to. Instead, fans become his companion, and he acknowledges that he is 'nothing without an audience' while briefly glancing towards us.

These instances might reflect the behind-the-scenes feelings during this era. Both the lead actor and the programme's showrunner, Steven Moffat, were living their childhood dreams of working on *Doctor Who*, so knowing glances and witty remarks come across as the pair revelling in this delight. It's certainly a technique Moffat uses elsewhere – for instance, in *Sherlock*, which plays with perception all the time. Though many of these flourishes came from the mind of Paul McGuigan, director of the pilot episode (among others), *A Study in Pink*, the style hugely impressed Moffat and co-creator Mark Gatiss, who adopted it and exaggerated it for subsequent stories. *The Abominable Bride* (its name inspired by *Doctor Who*'s *The Abominable Snowmen*) especially plays with the viewers' relationship and interactions with *Sherlock* as a show and Sherlock Holmes as a long-running franchise and character.

It might come as a surprise, then, that the clearest breaking of the fourth wall since *The Feast of Steven* came not from the mind of Moffat but of Toby Whithouse. *Before the Flood* opens with the Doctor wandering around his TARDIS explaining the

bootstrap paradox to the audience, before grabbing his guitar and playing us into a more rock-and-roll version of the theme tune. Whithouse apparently wrote this scene thinking that Moffat would request he rewrite it; instead, he loved it, and they pushed the idea further by bookending the episode with the guitar riff (and the Doctor shrugging his shoulder to the audience) leading into the end credits.

Sure enough, the temptation to break the fourth wall in front of you is too great. Like the Doctor smashing through the Confession Dial, you punch the wall, expecting some resistance. There's none: the barrier crumbles.

A funny thing happens when you step through that divide. Sometimes, you discover new planes of existence; for instance, now you find yourself on the SS. Shawcraft proper, in a special temporary festive exhibit. You wander over to the nearest object...

2. The Immortality Gate.

If you wanted to give everyone a face-lift, then this is the object for you: The Immortality Gate, created by the Vinvocci as a medical device to heal whole planets, then misused by the Master to make all of humanity look like Sam Tyler from *Life on Mars*. Admittedly, there are worse people to look like – the Trickster from *The Sarah Jane Adventures*, the Greek God Hephaestus, or that girl Bob Dylan sang about – but you’d rather everyone looked like individuals.

Wait a minute. Those Vinvocci appeared cute and inoffensive, but if they can cure *everyone*, why aren’t they sharing their technology? How long can they live? And why aren’t they seen as one of the most powerful races in the universe, up there with the Time Lords, Eternals, and Taran Wood Beast?

The Immortality Gate appeared in the 2009/10 festive special, *The End of Time*, the Tenth Doctor’s swansong story. The last thing David Tennant filmed for *Doctor Who* was his fall from the Vinvocci ship to the Naismith Mansion. Well, not quite. Because Tennant is a *Who* fan who achieved his childhood dream when he first appeared in *The Parting of the Ways*, it was never going to be easy stepping down from such a role.

So here are a few times David returned to the world of *Doctor Who* since, uh, leaving *Doctor Who*...

- **The Day of the Doctor:** The most notable

time we saw the Tenth Doctor again was in the fiftieth anniversary special, *The Day of the Doctor*, back in 2013. Appearing opposite Matt Smith as the Eleventh Doctor and John Hurt as the War Doctor, Tennant married Queen Elizabeth I (tying up a loose end from *The Shakespeare Code*), helped put an end to the Time War that had loomed over his head for a few centuries, and caused controversy on Twitter because his hair looked a bit different.

- **The Five(ish) Doctors Reboot:** Not content with only being in the main TV series, David also popped up in the *other* fiftieth anniversary celebration, *The Five(ish) Doctors Reboot*. Written by and starring Peter Davison, the humorous aside further included a host of other famous faces, like Colin Baker, Sylvester McCoy, Paul McGann, Sean Pertwee, Russell T Davies, Steven Moffat, Peter Jackson, and Ian McKellan.
- **The Wedding of Sarah Jane Smith:** *The End of Time* wasn't even the last time Tennant played the Tenth Doctor in 2009. That distinction goes to this two-part serial from *The Sarah Jane Adventures*, the big-warm-cuddle of a spin-off fronted by the much-missed Elisabeth Sladen. In the story, Sarah is whisked off her feet by Nigel Havers, but it's all a ruse, and it's up to the Doctor, Rani

Chandra, Luke, Clyde Langer, and K9 to help her save reality.

- **Around the World in 80 Days:** What do you mean, ‘he’s not the Doctor in *Around the World in 80 Days*’?! Don’t be so silly. In this 2021 drama, an adaptation of the 1873 Jules Verne novel, the lead character might call himself Phileas Fogg, but really, he’s an eccentric, sometimes rude, always engaging adventurer who travels the planet with his young companions! All he needed to do was mistakenly call Passepartout ‘Chatterton’ and you’ve got David Tennant as the First Doctor.
- **Time Lord Victorious:** The Tenth Doctor took the lead in this multiplatform media event that spanned 2020 and 2021. He was everywhere! There were novels, comics, audio adventures, a live experience, and some neat model sets from the now-defunct Hero Collector. As for what *Time Lord Victorious* was... Well, *no one really knows*. But there was an evil Ood called Brian, Billie Piper in a ragged dress, and Tennant looking cool in a Time Lord collar. Ah, so how did it all fit together? Well, *no one really knows that either*, so let’s move on, shall we?
- **Big Finish:** When the audio company Big Finish revealed that they had the license to cover some twenty-first century *Who*, fans crossed their fingers and hoped for an

ongoing series about the Absorbaloff. Instead, all we got were sets featuring Christopher Eccleston as the Ninth Doctor; twentieth century Doctors battling modern-day monsters like the Silence, Racnoss, and Weeping Angels; the continuing adventures of River Song; classic companions working side-by-side with UNIT; Strax the Sontaran meeting Jago and Litefoot from *The Talons of Weng-Chiang*; John Hurt reprising his role as the War Doctor; and more. Oh, and extra lashings of David Tennant. In fact, he's been prolific. He's starred in sets with Billie Piper and Catherine Tate; the aforementioned *Time Lord Victorious* audios; an *Out of Time* trilogy that paired him with the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Doctors; *The War Master: Self-Defence* with Derek Jacobi's Master; stories with Alex Kingston as River; a set with Leela, K9, Ace, and Nyssa; and a *Dalek Universe* series. He even has his own "missing" adventure – that is, the *Torchwood* tale, *Absent Friends*, left unreleased after accusations levelled at co-star John Barrowman.

- **Sixtieth Anniversary:** Most notably, Tennant isn't just the Tenth Doctor. No, we're not talking about the Meta-Crisis Doctor. At the end of *The Power of the Doctor*, Jodie Whittaker's Doctor regenerated into a very familiar face: yes, David Tennant is the

Fourteenth Doctor! Set to appear with Catherine Tate as Donna Noble over three specials in November 2023, we'll learn more about how and why the Doctor's revisiting a favourite visage for *Doctor Who's* sixtieth anniversary celebrations.

Of course, Tennant coming back is actually a result of the lockdown rewatches; organised by Emily Cook throughout the lockdown period, fans worldwide rewatched classic adventures and tweeted along. During one rewatch, Tate enthused about how much she'd love to come back with David Tennant and Russell T Davies. The latter then proposed this idea to the BBC.

So yes, we've seen and heard rather a lot of Tennant in the worlds of *Doctor Who*, but that's because he loves the part and the programme as a whole. We're certainly not complaining.

3. Time Vortex Turkey.

This is the turkey Clara was trying to cook in *The Time of the Doctor*. And failing spectacularly.

But it had to be done for Christmas dinner, so the Doctor exposed it to the time winds of the vortex, flowing right underneath the TARDIS console.

You get closer. Have a sniff. Nope, still not done yet.

The Time of the Doctor was obviously Matt Smith's last regular story as the Eleventh Doctor – and it came just after the fiftieth anniversary special, *The Day of the Doctor*, when a record thirteen incarnations of the Time Lord teamed up to save Gallifrey from the Time War.

And there's something curious about that. Why is it that multi-Doctor stories often happen so close to a contemporary Doctor regenerating?

The Day of the Doctor is a prime example because in the following episode, Matt Smith's Eleventh Doctor cheats the rules of regeneration and changes into Peter Capaldi's Twelfth Doctor. Reportedly, Smith was supposed to stay on longer so that gap would've been greater, separated perhaps by another season of stories leading up to *Trenzalore*, but that's just speculation. Nonetheless, it remains that the Eleventh Doctor meets two previous incarnations in the flesh (three if we count the Curator), then shuffles off this mortal coil. It's a

protracted regeneration for this Doctor, yet the whole tale is a study of existential dread, so a regeneration (or death itself) was always on the cards.

But it happened before that, and it's happened a couple of times since.

Like in *Twice Upon a Time*. The Twelfth Doctor refuses to regenerate then meets the First Doctor, at the North Pole, similarly refusing to change his face. Both do and the stories continue, though not before the pair share pained conversations about the nature of their unusual life and stare their respective deaths in the face. Albeit those faces look like Peter Capaldi and David Bradley. Because that's what it's all about, isn't it? An acceptance of the inevitable, as symbolised by the meeting of two incarnations: the beginning and the end, in one way; the beginning and beginning in another (Capaldi, after all, is the first of a new regenerative cycle, Timeless Child or not).

Interestingly, *World Enough and Time/The Doctor Falls*, the previous tale, is the first time two incarnations of the Master meet each other on TV, and that forces John Simm's Master to regenerate and Michelle Gomez's Missy to die. There's something about facing one's own self that sets Time Lords on a destructive path.

Let's go back further. The last multi-Doctor story of twentieth century *Who* is arguably *The Trial of a Time Lord*, in which the Sixth Doctor (Colin Baker) met the Valeyard (Michael Jayston), a dark version

of the Doctor from between regenerations. That was, of course, the Sixth Doctor's last season, although he doesn't regenerate until the next story, *Time and the Rani*, and we don't really know how much time passed between the serials (although it can't have been that long: Mel still looked like Bonnie Langford circa *Terror of the Vervoids*, not Bonnie circa *The Masked Dancer*). Still, *Trial* probably happened in Sixie's twilight years. Similarly, *The Two Doctors* likely occurred towards the end of the Second Doctor's life: though we can't be certain, his hair was peppered with white, leading fans to speculate about the so-called Season 6b happening after *The War Games* but before *Spearhead from Space*, meaning the Time Lords sent the Doctor on a few errands before forcing the face of Worzel Gummidge on the unsuspecting space hobo. In the Sixth Doctor's timeline, *The Two Doctors* happened in roughly the middle of his life. Again, *probably*.

Then there's *The Five Doctors*, which culminated the twentieth anniversary year. Season Twenty had been filled with returning enemies, like Omega, the Mara, and the Master, so *The Five Doctors* feels part of that run of episodes. Except it aired on 25th November 1983, closer to Season Twenty-one's premiere (*Warriors of the Deep* began on 5th January 1984, whereas Season Twenty had closed on 16th March 1983).

By that time, Peter Davison had had two seasons as the Fifth Doctor under his belt, and his last was

looming. Some sources reported that Patrick Troughton's advice to him on the set of *The Five Doctors* – to only stay three seasons, for fear of being typecast – pushed Davison into leaving *Doctor Who* (a decision he apparently regrets), although Peter has since said three seasons was always his plan anyway. Either way, a regeneration seemed inevitable.

It could be argued that the same is true of *The Three Doctors*, which opened Season Ten, Jon Pertwee's penultimate season as the Third Doctor. Yes, he had nine full stories after *The Three Doctors* before his departure in *Planet of the Spiders*, but he'd done his lion's share of serials, and somehow it felt like the end already, like this Doctor was looking onwards, to his demise. There's a degree of introspection and the shackles that, up until then, had defined the Third Doctor era – his being confined to Earth – are thrown off as the Time Lords grant him his freedom. At the end of Season Ten, Katy Manning left the show and, apparently spurred on by her leaving and Roger Delgado's passing, Pertwee decided to only do one more season. Time marched on, even for the then-longest-serving Doctor.

Deep Breath (with Matt Smith's brief cameo) somewhat bucks the trend, coming uniquely at the very start of a Doctor's life, and yet maybe it holds the key to why multi-Doctor stories feel so much like a death knoll.

Multi-Doctor serials are cause for celebration, but there's something gloomy about them too. That's what nostalgia is though: it's not solely about remembering and celebrating the past; it's doing so while acknowledging the gulf that's grown in time between that moment and this one. Seeing William Hartnell and Patrick Troughton again is special because they're no longer the Doctor. So yes, there's something funereal about those instances when Doctors meet.

This is exemplified by *The Power of the Doctor*, the last tale with Jodie Whittaker's Thirteenth Doctor. She doesn't exactly meet other incarnations in the flesh, but they're represented as she prepares to cross the regenerative threshold (before clawing herself back with a little help from her friends). And we see hologram versions of the Fifth and Seventh Doctors, giving some solace to Tegan Jovanka and Ace respectively. It seems that, whenever the Doctor regenerates, the character sees previous faces.

Remember *Heaven Sent*, when the Doctor faces his own skull (without realising it's his) and questions why we stare into the skulls of the dead? It's like that. It's an acknowledgement that entropy will always have its way, that time will always move on, that moments are only precious because they don't last.

Or, as the Twelfth Doctor and Clara put it, every Christmas is last Christmas.

4. Beep the Meep.

Or a statue of him anyway. Looking very cute and cuddly. Not a gun or grenade or Doomsday Weapon in sight. You're sure this is all a trick.

Because as you know from the *Doctor Who Magazine* comic strip, Beep the Meep might look sweet but, actually, he's a psycho. Ava Max wrote a song about him. And now there's talk that Beep might appear in an upcoming sixtieth anniversary special.

Russell T Davies is already keen to blur the lines between the TV series and other extensions of the franchise; the Fourteenth Doctor's adventures, for example, continue in *DWM*, taking place straight after the cliffhanger of *The Power of the Doctor*. (You could argue that Big Finish stories were made canon by *The Night of the Doctor* mentioning various audio companions too.) And yet Ace's appearance in the Thirteenth Doctor's swansong contradicts the *DWM* strip, in which the character died in the Seventh Doctor's arms.

Maybe Beep the Meep demonstrates how this is possible. He once crossed into another dimension, one where Doctor Who is played by an actor called Tom Baker. That's right: *Doctor Who* might be about to step into the multiverse.

By establishing the Mirror Universe in *The Original Series* then returning to it in iterations like

Deep Space Nine, *Enterprise*, and *Discovery*, *Star Trek* is a notable example of a sci-fi show featuring twisted versions of everything we know. However, *Doctor Who* seldom shows other universes. In twentieth century *Doctor Who*, *Inferno* is a rare example of the Doctor crossing into a parallel world; with a malicious Brigade Leader in charge of UNIT, an advanced drilling project dooming the planet, and the Doctor on the run, the serial remains a fan favourite – so it's a wonder the programme didn't revisit the idea of other universes at all back then.

However, another reality – and another Doctor – was at least hinted at in *Battlefield*, in which characters from Arthurian legend recognise Sylvester McCoy's Doctor as Merlin. This incarnation's meddling might simply not have happened yet, from his point of view, or they could have occurred in another world. It's this notion that gave way to other retellings of *Doctor Who* lore, courtesy of ranges like Big Finish's *Unbound* tales, which fashioned actors including David Warner, Arabella Weir, and Geoffrey Bayldon into the Doctor.

More recently, the Tenth Doctor informed us that travel to other universes was impossible after the Time War... just as the TARDIS crashed onto a parallel Earth which the Doctor nicknamed "Pete's World". The barrier between worlds was re-established for *Army of Ghosts/Doomsday*, broken down for Series Four, reinstated after *Journey's End*, and likely obliterated in *The Day of the Doctor*, seeing

as the Seventh Doctor states the Doctors' collective calculations cross "the boundaries that divide one universe from another".

With the creation of the Timeless Child, the Doctor is probably not from this universe anymore either. Many fans predicted that the Thirteenth Doctor's adventures would be revealed to have occurred in a parallel timeline, and further that the Fourteenth Doctor's will, but talk of other realities right now remains just that: talk.

So why now? Well, it would certainly fit the zeitgeist.

Everything Everywhere All at Once proved a huge success, and the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) is certainly leaning into the multiverse as it ploughs ahead, post *Avengers: Endgame*. The *Loki* TV show on Disney+ properly opened up the multiverse and *Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness* and *Spider-Man: No Way Home* expounded on that. Further instalments in the MCU will explore it further, presumably culminating in *Avengers: Secret Wars*, echoing a comic book event which amalgamated a couple of timelines. Marvel's multiverse is so well established, in fact, that each universe has its own numerical designation. The comic book world is Earth-616, the Ultimate universe (from which Miles Morales' Spider-Man hails) is Earth-1610, and the MCU is Earth-199999.

While it's unlikely *Doctor Who* will throw itself into the multiverse with that level of intricacy

straight away, it's nice to know that, in multiversal theory, every version of *Doctor Who* could be considered canon. Even *Zygon: When Being You Just Isn't Enough*.

5. The Fifth Wall.

The exhibition has twisted out of shape, perhaps due to the gravitational waves emanating from the black hole at the centre of the collection, and you find yourself... on the ceiling? No, wait, this has a little plaque on too. This is an object. This “fifth wall”.

A fifth wall? Is that a thing? You look on Wikipedia. It's largely unhelpful and you get side-tracked, meandering down an online route that takes you from breaking walls, to building construction, to Pink Floyd, to the walls of blood vessels. Eventually, you end up learning about Andreas Vesalius (incredible man, cool beard, questionable dress sense) and wonder how you got here.

Okay, back to Google, and “what is breaking the fifth wall?” takes you to Wiktionary, which sounds rude but is actually an online dictionary, a sister project of Wikipedia. There, you find a handy citation from Ken Ludden's 2014 *Academy Method: Introduction to Teacher Training*, which explains: “When wanting to show intimacy with the audience, one will advance in this direction. It is known in acting as ‘breaking the fifth wall’ and is when [actors] may make comments, or [asides], sharing their internal process with the audience, as if stepping out of the world created on the stage to join with them on an intimate basis.”

Oh, now you realise what breaking the fifth wall means. It's an indulgence.

Well, allow us to indulge...

Let's be straight here. *6 Objects of Dr Who* is here to give you a taste of *100 Objects of Dr Who*, but it's also because I've always wanted to write a Christmas book. This isn't exactly that, but it's not *not* a Christmas book either.

Obviously, this is all down to Shaun Russell, head of publishing at Candy Jar Books, aka my boss. Or one of my bosses. As a freelance writer, I have lots of bosses and none of them really act like bosses. Shaun is an enthusiastic and inspiring person (and didn't quite believe me when I said that "breaking the fifth wall" exists).

Shaun set up Candy Jar Books in 2010 with Justin Chaloner. The independent publisher put out a number of great tomes, including the bestselling *Companions: Fifty Years of Doctor Who Assistants* by Andy Frankham-Allen, but you'll probably know them best for the *Lethbridge-Stewart* range, for which Andy is the Range Editor.

These are officially licensed by the estates of *The Web of Fear* writers, Mervyn Haisman and Henry Lincoln, meaning we can enjoy numerous appearances of the Great Intelligence and his Yeti, as well as the Dominators, Edward and Anne Travers, and the Quarks. Further agreements with additional estates have resulted in return trips to Fang Rock, battles with the Bandril from *Timelash*, and, most recently, licensed stories featuring UNIT.

That's obviously all very exciting, but I have a

particular soft spot for *The Lucy Wilson Mysteries*, billed as a Young Adult series starring the granddaughter of the Brigadier, but a delight to read no matter your age.

And it's through those releases that I got to know Shaun and Andy. I've been editor of *The Doctor Who Companion* website for a few years now, so see all the press releases for their various novel series, non-fiction projects, and one-off books. In 2018, I was amazed to be asked to write for an upcoming collection celebrating fifty years of the Brigadier; this resulted in "Nicholas Courtney in thirteen Objects", published in *The Brigadier: Declassified*. It told the life of Courtney through a variety of eclectic pieces, including a model Sphinx, his Margaret Rutherford Medal, and the fake moustache worn by Nick in *Inferno*.

Shaun and Andy seemed to like this essay and asked if I'd be interested in expanding this concept to cover – you guessed it – *Doctor Who* in 100 objects.

Similarly, you might have guessed that I immediately said yes.

I split up the planned 100 objects into decades, aiming for every era to be covered and every fan catered for, and tried to put my personal biases aside so that everything was equal. That wasn't too difficult: there's an abundance of stuff to talk about. The difficult thing was trying to cover *the entire history of Doctor Who...* in just 80,000 words. Give or take. 80,000 words sounds like a lot, and my aching

wrists would agree with that sentiment, but not when you want to cover it all.

Ah, but that was the issue. Readers don't want another history of *Doctor Who*, do they? Do you? You've read about it in *Doctor Who Magazine*, in *Doctor Who: The Complete History*, in the 10,000 other non-fiction books detailing the behind-the-scenes of the show. You want something different. That was really the breakthrough point in planning *100 Objects of Dr Who*: give readers something they don't expect.

Okay, so to give you a taste of the nonsense I planned for the book, here are ten choice extracts from the pitch document:

- **Asteroid 3325** [Yeah, an asteroid, because why not? This is the Asteroid TARDIS, so we can go through some of the things named after *Doctor Who*, including the TARDIS constellation, Sam Tyler in *Life on Mars*... and the Lomax family in *Hollyoaks*, whose number include Peri, Leela, Rose, and Tegan! Good to contrast the small-scale beginnings with its cultural impact a few years down the line.]
- **Cyberman Head from Van Statten's Museum** [How many Doctors and which companions have never faced the Cybermen on TV? And as we pick that question apart, let's talk about the Cybermen hierarchy.]
- **A regenerating hand** [ELDRAD MUST LI— Oh, sorry, I don't know what came over me.]

How *Doctor Who* has reflected our fear of radiation.]

- **Shadow Edwardian yacht** [Shockingly, *Enlightenment* is the first serial written and directed by women; the second is *The Witchfinders*. A good opportunity to talk about the most prolific directors of each era.]
- **Model of the Time Lord court** [Highlighting the best models in *Who* history.]
- **The Queen Vic from *EastEnders*** [Focusing on the various failed revivals, like the Spielberg negotiations, Matthew Graham's pitch, and the idea from Gatiss, Roberts, and Hickman. Plus, *The Dark Dimension* and *Dimensions in Time*. Presented as transcripts of fans enjoying a pub quiz.]
- **Kroll (Kroll, Kroll, Kroll, Kroll, Kroll, ad infinitum)** [Ratings oddities. What are the most watched episodes of *Doctor Who*? And the least? And yes, I just really like Kroll being on the list.]
- **Seal of the High Council of Gallifrey** [Let's be pernickety and highlight stories – probably in bullet format – which contradict *The Day of the Doctor* and *The Time of the Doctor* saying Matt's the last in the regenerative cycle; the first is in *The Next Doctor*, in which the Tenth, following his Meta-Crisis, considers Jackson Lake as the next Doctor “or the next but one.” Then, because I'm a ridiculous fan who likes

to account for retrospective inconsistencies, I'll try to find in-canon ways to iron out these creases.]

- **A Spoonhead using active camouflage to disguise itself as a War Machine** [How *Doctor Who* has reflected our fear of technology. And asking the important question, isn't *The Bells of Saint John* just *The Idiot's Lantern* done properly?]
- **Kerblam! Man** [Hurrah for commercialisation! The oddest examples of *Doctor Who* merchandise... Further mentioning the hilarious-but-infuriating world of fake merchandise, like the Cyber-Controller Helicopter, found in a shop in Blackpool.]

If you're looking at those objects and are thinking, 'but those are ridiculous,' then I agree with you completely. It's the sort of nonsense I would like to read, so I thought I'd write it instead.

Plus, the book *does* cover the history of the programme, so it's got you covered if you haven't already read about how *Doctor Who* came into being, how John Nathan-Turner steered the ship for a decade, how it was unofficially cancelled in 1989, how Russell T Davies and co. revived it, and so on.

Oh, but I wanted to go a step further and suggested three different ways to read *100 Objects*. The first is chronological. The Doctor would not be impressed with such linear thinking. The second is

the coffee table approach, i.e. you pick it up, flip through, find an object you like, read that, cast it aside again, then come back at another point and start this random process again. (Dang, I should've called this "The TARDIS Randomiser Approach". Is it too late to stop the printing press?)

Finally, the "*Turn Left Approach*". At the end of each section, you get to Choose Your Own Adventure, i.e. carry on chronologically, or follow directions to another object somewhere else in the book. You skip all over the place, without knowing quite how many objects you've got left to read. You could find yourself on the penultimate object but have eighty chapters still to read.

Yep, that took some planning.

But I loved it. Shaun said he was happy with the book too... although this might've been in a bid to stop me phoning, emailing, DMing, and generally nagging him about it. And Shaun had the inspired idea to bring Martin Baines in on the journey to not only provide the cover – that gorgeous tea-soaked nostalgia fest – but also additional illustrations every ten objects.

Finally, I held the first edition in my hands, and was a little overwhelmed. I skimmed through it too. There were a few months between sending it across to Shaun and actually holding a copy, so it was nice to revisit some of what I'd written, especially my favourite bits. I don't mean that in a vain way – I mean favourite bits *to write*. For instance...

I'm a big Eleventh Doctor fan, so I really wanted to tackle River Song's adventures in an unusual fashion. Everyone knows what it looked like from the Doctor's point of view (go watch *Silence in the Library/Forest of the Dead*, through to *The Husbands of River Song*), and a few sites will piggyback on *Doctor Who Magazine* by retelling it all from River's viewpoint. So I wanted to do it chronologically. That is, from the universe's POV. Where did River show up in time?

It should've been easy, right? Some dates are obvious: 102AD, Wiltshire (*The Pandorica Opens*); 3rd April 1938, New York (*The Angels Take Manhattan*); 22nd April 2011, Utah (*The Impossible Astronaut/ Day of the Moon*); and so forth. Readers, it was not easy.

Because you've got to account for all the brief scenes and mentions. Aside from an instance of "no time, no place", and an unknown date on the Planet of the Rain Gods, it starts at the beginning of time. River graffitied the oldest cliff-face on Planet One. Then there's Stormcage, Starship UK's Royal Collection, and the Maldovarium in 5145; the Luna University in 5123; the National Museum in an alternative 1996; the last of the great frost fairs in February 1814; etc. Basically, anything that River even briefly talks about had to be included.

The toughest part was dating Christmas Day on Darillium. We don't know how long the restaurant took to build, when the Doctor made the booking, nor what the receptionist meant when she said the

next available slot is on “Christmas Day in four years’ time”, in a place where one night is longer than one year. Cue lots of head-scratching.

Another fun part was object #13, the Tyrannosaurus Rex. It’s a model from *Invasion of the Dinosaurs*. To hide the Jurassic surprise, the first episode had the contracted title *Invasion* – which gave me a chance to indulge in title oddities and curiosities. *Invasion* was also the name of the penultimate part of *The Web Planet*, and further features in *The Dalek Invasion of Earth*, *The Invasion*, *The Android Invasion*, and *The Invasion of Time*.

That section includes lots of meanderings, like:

- All the serial titles that feature entirely made-up words like *Terror of the Autons*, *Meglos*, and *Spyfall*.
- How many times the Daleks, Cybermen, Master, and Rani are mentioned in titles.
- The sole instance where a name references the incarnation number of the Doctor who appears.
- The most- and least-used vowels in serial titles.
- Companions and historical figures name-checked in story titles.
- The only two-part title that references locations in space *and* time.
- The shortest and longest names.

- Stories with punctuation in their titles.

And it feels pertinent to add here that “Christmas” makes its first outing with *The Christmas Invasion*, then again for *A Christmas Carol* and *Last Christmas*. Of course, several stories share their names with novels, but *A Christmas Carol* is the only intentional one we know of. *The Doctor, the Widow and the Wardrobe* alludes to C.S. Lewis’ *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, and *The Snowmen* to the work of the late, great Raymond Briggs.

Christmas, as you’ll likely have noticed, means a lot to me. So does *Doctor Who*. Writing means even more. So I guess one of the scenarios I work towards is someone opening *100 Objects of Dr Who* on Christmas morning. That would feel very special.

In fact, I do know that someone has put another book I’ve worked on aside for a Christmas present. That’s *Timeslides: The Doctor Who Art of Colin Howard*, which I edited, working with Col to tell the stories behind his stunning artwork.

A fan will be flicking through a hardback copy of that on Christmas Day. So heck, maybe, just maybe, I have written a Christmas book after all.

The festivities are often about indulgence, aren’t they? An overflow of presents, merriments, food, TV, and all the warm, fulfilling stuff that makes life feel full.

But that indulgence can get to you. You yawn. Gulping down air. Pulling your lids down. This

place, kooky as it is, has been fun, but you have promises to keep and miles to go before you sleep, and miles to go before you –

Christmas morning.

The dreams of the previous night ebb away, fading into the folds of your mind. The air almost twinkles around you. You're warm in bed, but you want to get up anyway. See what's under your tree this year.

What has Santa left you?

You head to the Christmas tree, its baubles glistening and the star on top guiding you to what lies beneath.

6. Rose's Red Bicycle.

From when she was twelve. As given to her by Father Christmas. Or maybe by the Ninth Doctor?

In *The Doctor Dances*, the Doctor hints that he's the big guy in the red suit after all, but that can't be the whole story. He might have a time machine, but the Doctor surely isn't the one who leaves us all presents under our trees and in our stockings each year. So does Santa exist in the *Doctor Who* universe?

Father Christmas has been largely absent from *Doctor Who*, likely owing to the dearth of festive stories throughout the twentieth century. Then, since *The Christmas Invasion* in 2005, the *Doctor Who* Christmas Day specials have gone the whole hog, making up for lost ground by featuring robots dressed as Santa, implying that the Doctor and St. Nick (or, as the Time Lord's always known him, Jeff) are good buddies, and actually starring Father Christmas himself. Sort of.

Let's rewind.

Away from TV, numerous *Doctor Who* tales have starred Santa Claus. The first was in *A Christmas Story*, a four-part comic strip printed in *TV Comic* between December 1965 and January 1966. This saw the First Doctor and his grandchildren, John and Gillian (original creations for the comics), visit "Christmasland", where they find a disgruntled Père Noël who's moved from the North Pole because it got too noisy. "But things are difficult here too!" he laments. "The Demon Magician interferes all the time... but maybe you can help me?"

Sure enough, the Doctor helps the elves get back on track by shrinking the magic imp and sending him hurtling into space in a toy rocket. As you do.

The canon of this tale is up for debate. Nonetheless, when the Second Doctor sees Claus again, he reminds him that they have met each other before. *The Man Who (Nearly) Killed Christmas* by Mark Michalowski, collected in *Short Trips: A Christmas Treasury*, explained how Father Christmas could make all those deliveries in one night: by using clones and a wormhole generator.

Kris Kringle has popped up in many multimedia tales, including the Eleventh Doctor comic *Silent Knight*; the tongue-in cheek audio *Iris Wildthyme and the Claws of Santa*; and the short story *A Visit from Saint Nicholas*, proving inspiration for Clement C. Moore. If you consider all these stories as part of the multiversal “Whoniverse”, then these adventures attest that, yes, Father Christmas is in the *Doctor Who* mythos. But not everyone classifies expanded media as canon. So what about the TV show? Is there a definitive answer there?

Thoughts must immediately turn to *Last Christmas* – in which *we actually see Father Christmas!* Or do we?

Appropriately, the character, who first appeared in a shock mid-credits scene in *Death in Heaven*, is played by Nick Frost, but the festive special is all about dreams. We can’t trust much that we see. The Doctor is fooled a few times; it’s only Jolly Old Saint

Nick showing up that clues him into the fact that he is still dreaming.

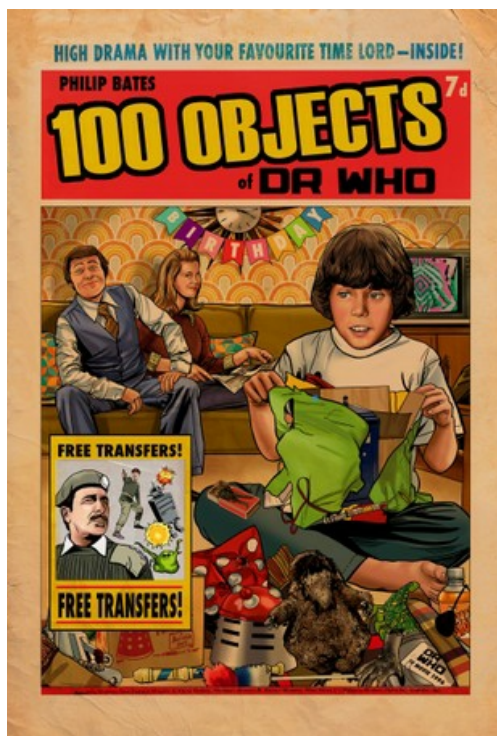
Our only real hint that Santa himself has a hand in proceedings is a tangerine, *Last Christmas*' last shot. It's implied that the Doctor and Clara owe him their thanks after he has given them a second chance at travelling together.

We don't really see him. Yet Santa Clause definitely exists in the *Doctor Who* universe. How do we know that? It's simple: *Doctor Who* is supposed to be set in the real world.

Despite the alien invasions, the fictional universe(s) the Doctor journeys through represents our own. So if *Doctor Who* takes place in the real world, if everything that's true here is also true there, then of course Father Christmas exists in *Doctor Who* too.

Merry Christmas to all, and to all, a good night.

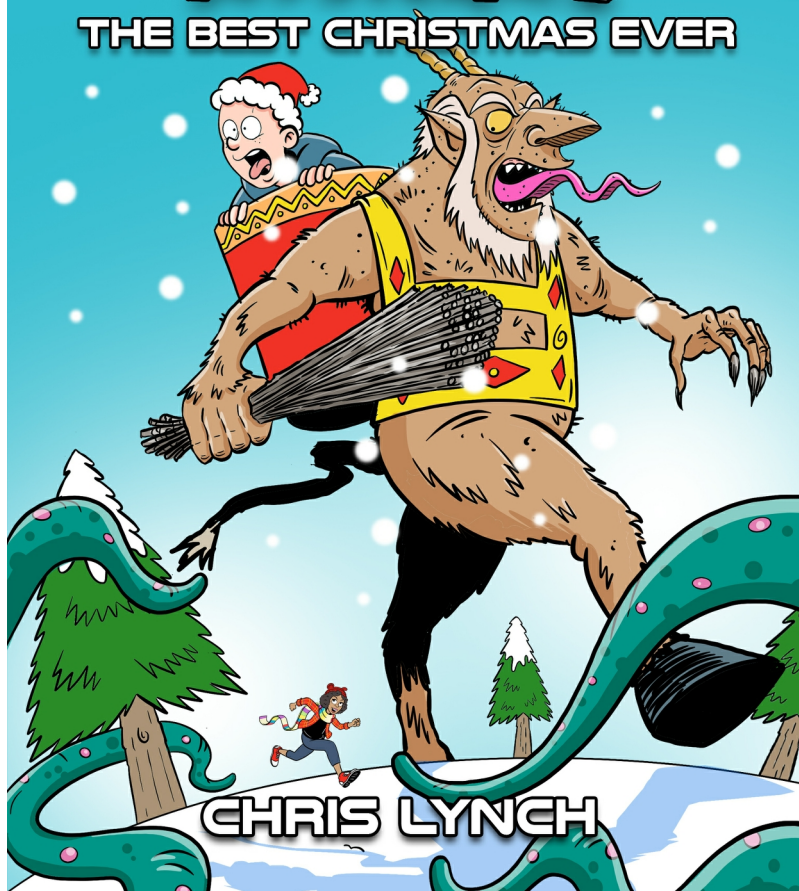
100 Objects of Dr Who is available to order from [Candy Jar Books](#) now, priced £9.99. It's slightly less insulting than our space junk mailbot, don't worry.



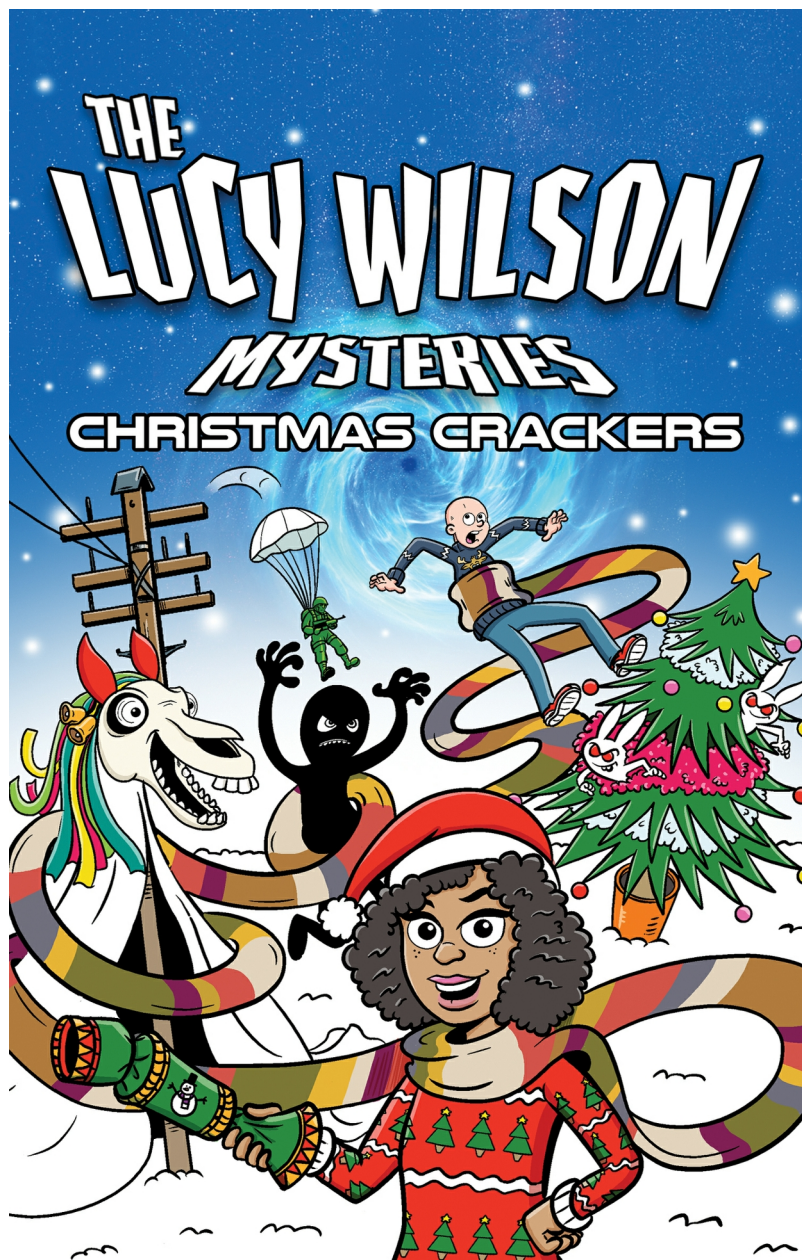
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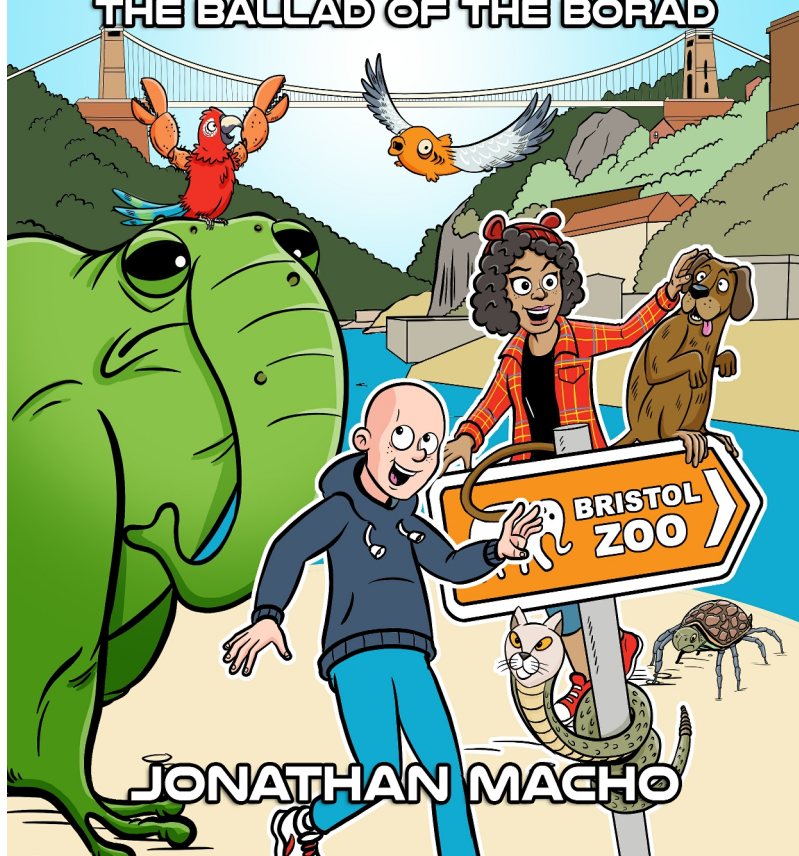
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