

## A dangerous routine

Naturally dieting was still an issue for the cast, as Pennant Roberts recalls: 'Custom and practice at that time was for the location caterers to provide a choice of two hot lunches. Since *Tenko* was a special case we arranged that salads should also be available. The actresses were as good as their word and religiously opted for salad every day rather than steak and chips!' While some of the actresses found this hard, with Joanna Hole describing it, quite frankly, as 'a flipping nightmare' and recalling 'cabbage soup and Mars bars cut up into tiny pieces,' Stephanie Beacham found that after her initial carefully planned weight gain she had slipped into a very dangerous routine of the opposite extreme:

The first 8 to 10 pounds I'd put on I lost very fast and then, because of the order of filming, I had to lose the weight very fast indeed and I nearly went to anorexia. I used to carry around a polythene bag of cauliflower and cottage cheese. That's all I ate. I remember looking at myself stark naked in the mirror. My ribs were sticking out and I had absolutely no boobs. And the dreadful thing is that I was delighted!

Thankfully Stephanie's dangerous new dietary regime did not go unnoticed for too long: 'It was Steph Cole who recognised that I wasn't eating with anyone else and was looking rather disapprovingly at people who were eating, and she said: "From now on you will eat with us." It was correct and out of respect.'

## Kids in camp

The time in the camp was regularly punctuated by the sounds of children laughing and playing. Some of them were the children of the cast, who were just there to enjoy the school holidays – like the children of Ann Bell (Rebecca and John), Stephanie Cole (Emma) and Stephanie Beacham (Chloe and Phoebe), as the latter describes: 'The sandpit that was our set was perfect for my children' – while others were playing the children of the camp, such as Kerry Tovey. Tovey, who attended the Dorset filming with her mother (who was also an extra), remembers being 'given little things to do' in the series. These little things didn't go unnoticed by the writers and she would later be written up to be a named character, Suzy Rankin, who had a great deal more to do.

Quite a bit older than the other children was Ann Queensberry's daughter, Alice, who Veronica Roberts remembers: 'We adopted very quickly,' but who could be a bit of a handful at times, as her mother recalls: 'I had a few days off and had to go back to London and Emily Bolton was looking after Alice. However, somebody rang me to say: "Emily can't cope, you're going to have to come back!" I don't think Emily knew many 15-year-old girls! At least none quite like Alice!'

## Striking out

After having stayed at the hotel in Poole for some time, Veronica Roberts remembers: ‘The hotel room was so hot and I couldn’t bear it any longer, and Louise [Jameson] and I decided we would find somewhere we would rent together and we got a two-bedroom apartment. It was all one floor and we moved in. We felt rather outrageous that we’d left the main gang and, now we had



Louise and Veronica (Stephanie Cole)

some space, we could have a party if we wanted to. That was lovely.’ Louise also remembers this as a happy time: ‘Because we were away on location for quite a long time down in Dorset, when you get thrown together like that you get much closer than if you’re just going in to work,’ and, of Veronica, she recalls: ‘Ronnie was amazing. I would number her among my dearest friends. Patti [Lawrence] used to say: “We’ve got twelve actresses here” – eight of whom I know she adored, a few whom she had a slight question mark over – “and then there’s Veronica Roberts.” We *all* used to think this about Ronnie. We considered her to be ‘something else.’ She illustrates this by describing how: ‘Ronnie used to go to sleep as Dorothy. In the very first episode Dorothy’s baby had a tiny little teddy bear, and all through the series, whenever we had those scenes when we were lying in our bunks, Ronnie used to hold the teddy bear in her hand. I said: “You’ve got to show that to the director. You’ve got to get that on camera.” It was just Ronnie doing her own little truthful thing and I don’t think it ever was seen.’

It was only during research for this book that Louise learnt about something that Veronica had done all those years ago while they shared digs together in Dorset: ‘I remember Lou was the worst timekeeper of anybody I know. What would happen was that if we were called at the same time, she’d never be ready so I’d be late for my own make-up call. Myself and the make-up ladies made a deal that if we were called together they’d make her call earlier so that she would still be ready on time but she’d think she was late!’ Jameson’s shocked response to this deception was: ‘I didn’t know that,’ before admitting: ‘I was notoriously ten minutes late wherever I went.’ Roberts remembers the time shared with Louise as one of great happiness tinged with sadness: ‘Lou was in

love and became pregnant. I can remember that being a great moment of joy for her, with a sadness that we knew that her pregnancy might alter how much she could be involved in *Tenko*.’ Although Jameson would be able to record the remainder of the series, if it went to a second run it looked unlikely that the character of Blanche could continue.

## Two-hander

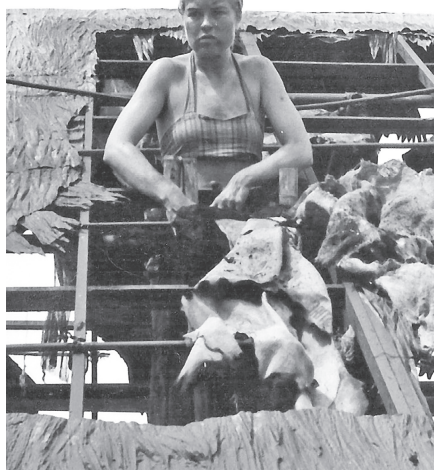
One of Pennant Roberts’s favourite *Tenko* scenes was a two-hander from the fifth episode, filmed on Thursday 13 August, featuring Blanche and Rose:

It was a touching scene between Louise and Stephanie that we had prepared to be shot in a number of short sections. However, in the event, the actresses were so into their roles that we did it all in one. I had two cameras, so I was able to call my shots and change my lens sizes as if directing coverage of a football match. When I edited the scene afterwards, much to my chagrin I discovered that the sound of the London to Weymouth train could be heard in the distance as the railway line was not that far away. But I was able to drown out the incongruity by bringing up the level of jungle sound effects. We were as heavily dependent on these soundtracks to create credibility as we were on the glycerine sprays we used to create perspiration marks on the actresses’ blouses. I gave the general direction that anyone could take a swipe at invisible ‘mosquitoes’ as and when they saw fit, promising to lay on the appropriate sound effects later!

Jameson also remembers the scene and puts down the fact that she and Beacham managed it in one take to the fact that: ‘We’d done so much work on it together,’ going on to add: ‘Stephanie and I are fanatical rehearsers. We do the lines, do the lines, do the lines, so that you’re ready for what others throw at you.’

## Goodbye Pennant

As Pennant Roberts reached his final two filming days – Friday 14 and Saturday 15 August – the ‘armpits issue’ would once again rear its head, during the scenes in which the women rebuild the sick bay: ‘Ken Riddington had been watching rehearsals in the scanner [van] whilst I was on set putting a scene together. He rushed out and brought things to a halt. Ken had seen a shot of Louise Jameson with her arms raised and hadn’t been able to discern any underarm hair – had she been shaving?!’ Jameson denied it and told him that she just didn’t have much hair under her arms. Roberts adds: ‘Close inspection revealed that Louise’s underarm hair was very light in tone and texture, so I compromised by asking the make-up supervisor to darken it artificially!’ No more ‘crises’ ensued, and the arrival of the *Kempei Tai* by car to interrogate Marion was the last scene under Pennant’s watch: ‘I made a slow return to London to commence editing



Clockwise from top left: Rose pitches in; Kate atop the atap; Sister Ulrica; Louise Jameson's under-arm hair causes a furore (all Evgeny Gridneff)