

Martin Clunes returns to play grumpy GP for the final time

Martin Clunes returns to Cornwall to play the nation's favourite grumpy medic for the last time in the final series of the hugely successful ITV drama Doc Martin.

He stars as Dr. Martin Ellingham, the GP with a brusque bedside manner and a phobia of blood, in eight new episodes of the popular drama produced by Buffalo Pictures, and set in the idyllic hamlet of Portwenn in Cornwall.

Picturesque Port Isaac provides the beautiful backdrop for this tenth series, with all the regular members of the cast reprising their roles.

Caroline Catz plays Doc Martin's wife, Louisa Ellingham, who resigned from her job as headmistress at the local school to pursue a new career in child counselling.

Also returning for the finale are Dame Eileen Atkins who plays Doc Martin's formidable Aunt Ruth. Ian McNeice is back to play Bert Large, with Joe Absolom as his son Al. John Marquez is PC Joe Penhale, Jessica Ransom is the doctor's receptionist Morwenna Newcross and Selina Cadell is pharmacist Mrs Tishell.

The guest stars in the series include Fay Ripley, David Hayman, Ben Miller, Lesley Nicol, Hermione Norris, Kenneth Cranham and Rupert Graves.

At the end of the last series the Doc decided, after having his medical career scrutinised by the General Medical Council because of his blood phobia, that he would resign from being Portwenn's GP.

This final series sees the Doc making efforts to overcome his phobia, and beginning to question whether he made the right decision about resigning. He and Louisa have also welcomed a baby daughter, Mary Elizabeth, a sister for four-year-old James Henry.

With Louisa pursuing her new career as a child counsellor in his old surgery, the Doc is left literally holding the baby, and indulging his hobby of repairing clocks on the kitchen table. But does he really want his old job back?

The life of the curmudgeonly GP, and his on-off love affair, and eventual marriage to Louisa has won millions of fans in the UK and around the world since the first series aired in 2004.

The huge popularity of the ITV drama has brought thousands more tourists to the pretty hamlet of Port Isaac, and the surrounding areas of the north coast of Cornwall to see where the series is filmed. This boost to tourism was recognised by Cornwall Tourism which presented a special award for outstanding contribution to tourism to the Doc Martin team.

Over the years Buffalo Pictures has made regular contributions to Port Isaac's village funds. The funding has been used by the villagers to help and support a range of local facilities.

Commented Martin Clunes:

"I have loved going to Cornwall to make Doc Martin over the last 18 years, and I really looked forward to coming back to this beautiful and unique part of the country this year for the tenth and final series.

We've been so lucky to get to come here for so many years and the cast and crew have made lasting friendships with a lot of the people who live in Port Isaac.

We have some great story lines and amazing guest actors for the new series.

We're going to miss the place and all the people we have made the series with but it's a perfect time to say thank you very much, put the back cover on the book of Doc Martin and go and try something new. Oh and then there's a Christmas special which really is special and a great collector's item for our fans."

Doc Martin has been produced locally in seven territories: UK, Germany, France, Greece, Netherlands, Czech Republic/Slovakia and Spain and sold in 138 countries.

Buffalo Pictures has filmed a Christmas special to bid a final farewell to Doc Martin.

The company has also produced a documentary for ITV, provisionally titled "Doc Martin – A Celebration." Directed by Stuart Orme and produced by Evie-Bergson-Korn, the documentary will highlight the amazing longevity and impact both locally and around the world of Doc Martin over the years, as well as giving the audience a glimpse behind the scenes of the final series with the cast and crew.

This series is produced by Philippa Braithwaite, executive producer is Mark Crowdy, and the directors are Nigel Cole, Philip John and Kate Cheeseman. The writers are Jack Lothian, Andrew Rattenbury, Kevin Cecil, Julian Unthank and Chris Reddy.

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Martin Clunes plays Dr Martin Ellingham

Why did you take the decision that series ten would be the finale?

It just felt right for everyone involved. We would love to come to Cornwall and work here but we can't do every job down here.

It certainly felt, with this many episodes in, coming up with the stories, not just the individual stories but the through lines with the characters across the series and their journeys throughout it, it has just been done now, and I think we would be repeating ourselves. It just closes the circle.

I will never get a job as good as this again I know that in terms of what it has done for us personally, but also just in the sheer joy of it, not being in a city to film it, and being allowed to make something funny in front of a camera, which is my favourite work experience. To get to do it with this level of input, to have a voice in decisions, and to have it so loved. Nothing of what I am saying could have been predicted when we started. It was just another case of saying 'let's see if we can get this one away'.

The first series launched in 2004, did you ever imagine it would become as popular as it has become?

No because all you think of is how popular it needs to be to get a recommission. It is sort of quite mechanical in a way. Caroline Catz's husband Michael reminds me of what I said at the wrap party outside the village hall after the first series: 'I wouldn't mind doing this for another ten years'. I sort of lightheartedly said that. And here we are 18 years later.

What has been the reaction of the public who gather to watch the filming in the village to the news that this is the last series?

There were some people who said 'please don't stop'. But I think it has been a long time and it has been a great number of episodes so I think they appreciate that if we say it is time to stop, it is time to stop.

As an actor presumably you would like to move on to other roles?

Any employment takes you off the employment market doesn't it? I have been lucky enough to have done other things whilst doing this as well. Because it is every other year we film, it does take such a chunk out of - five months out of 24 is a lot less than five out of 12. I don't think I will work as much again, I will be surprised if I do.(he jokes.)

You came to the role of Doc Martin after playing the affable character of William, the undertaker in the ITV drama William and Mary. The Doc couldn't be more different.

It was a leap. I need something to act, someone to act, or something to pin someone on rather than just open a script and a nice guy says some kind of nice things. William was an affable undertaker. But we made this up. It just seemed a good use of me, and also I am physically quite chaotic, and it is an attempt to impose some order on me, with this sharp short haircut, and the tailored suit, I am much stiller.

I noticed on the Platinum Jubilee Pageant I was moving about all over the place. So I am aware of stilling myself for this, and being economical because it suits the character. It remains a stretch for me and a challenge but also a good source of being funny.

One of the things you said in an interview for the very first series was "I really like having the opportunity to be loathsome" with the character.

He is sort of loathsome, but it has defined itself as the series has gone on. Sometimes a writer will write the Doc being unkind, but he isn't, he is just clear, he is just not kind, he is not unkind, he doesn't reach to be unpleasant to people. There is a dryness to him. It's fun to play.

What are your memories of making the first series?

I remember filming at the Camelford Hotel and walking into the door in the first series. It wasn't in the script, it was just an idea I had on the day, but it became quite a tone for me, a sort of benchmark for me because I had just been like super doc and diagnosed Louisa's eye condition on the spot, and I just thought 'whack him in the face for being so cocky'. We have now done that with the Doc a few times with door frames and things.

What has happened to your character over the last ten series. Is he still as grumpy as ever?

He is as impatient with people as ever, but he is a happy parent. There's this dog which he tolerates for his son James's sake for instance. He has had to be reminded that as a parent you can't be single minded and bend everyone to your will, which is kind of reflected in the Christmas episode as well - that kind of thing of him evolving and learning that he needs to listen, and think

of others a bit. His continuing love affair with his wife coupled with his lack of tolerance. Having her in practice in the same building has its penalties.

He realised he had to change to keep his marriage?

Yes but also we realised that whilst it was great fun to have this combative character, we believed that he needed a human heart so that has to move. That is where we have made the changes in him.

In this series there is another baby for the couple - Mary Elizabeth - who is named after our first cocker spaniel Mary.

What have been the highlights of the last ten series?

It's a bit naff to say, but it has all been a highlight. There have been bits that stick in my memory - like abseiling down a cliff wearing a suit, normal shoes and and carrying a medical bag. That was out on the cliffs with dear old Richard Johnson. I had to do an emergency trepanning (perforating a person's skull) with a drill into the guy's head. I did actually do the abseiling, I did that walking out over the edge of the cliff which was quite alarming. I had the drill in one hand and the medical bag in the other.

You'd think a stunt man might have done that scene?

No it makes it better if you do it yourself.

Helicopters were always a highlight. Before we used drones we used helicopters for some shots, and we were always terribly excited when the helicopter came over. There was one scene where the helicopter flew into the harbour to film a scene with Caroline and I outside the Doc's house. The helicopter was level with us, in the harbour, but then it flew off. All the crew were lying down under windows, hiding from the helicopter so they weren't caught in the shot. It's the sort of thing now you can do in five minutes with a drone.

Being allowed to pretend to fall in love with Caroline Catz every other year has been a big joy. It really is.

The series has attracted a huge array of guest stars over the years

Sigourney Weaver, Danny Huston, Caroline Quentin - we were gutted that we couldn't find anything for a homeopathic vet - the character she has played - in this last series. We did really try to find something. Her daughter Rose is in an episode of this series, though.

Roger Lloyd Pack, Claire Bloom, played my mother, Ben Miller was a crazy park ranger, Kenneth Cranham was Louisa's father, Richard Johnson was a curmudgeonly colonel, Julie Graham was PC Penhale's estranged wife, Anne Reid was a woman who ran a cat sanctuary.

Celia Imrie - her son Angus is in this series and he remembers coming with her as a boy to Port Isaac when she filmed an episode in the first series.

Have actors approached you to play a role?

Tom Conti is a good example. I'd never met Tom Conti, but I remember my mum taking me to see him in *Whose Life Is It Anyway?* at The Savoy all those years ago. He came up to us at a Dame Edna Everage event and said 'I really like your show, it's the only witty thing on television' and it lodged in there, and we offered him the role of a surgeon who was scrutinising the Doc in the ninth series.

We have a standing joke on the series of making up funny names for the patients. I came up with one this morning Robin Banks! With Jess, who plays the doc's receptionist Morwenna, we have a list of names on our phones that we have used. We kept the list in the appointments book on the

desk of the surgery. Everybody contributes suggestions for funny names. The names are never in the script. Jess and I throw them in. I do it to surprise Philippa (Braithwaite, the producer) in the rushes.

What have you enjoyed most about making the series?

My favourite work experience is when everything is off the lorry in the middle of a field. That is when I am happiest because I just love the way a film crew works. I know what everybody does and appreciate the way that they do it. To be a part of that, amongst like minded friends is just jam. That's my job and that it is successful. I was happy in the field, but to have other people liking what we made as well in the way they have around the world it's mental. And of course the fact that I get to go to work with my wife (Philippa Braithwaite is the producer), and to be down here in Cornwall. I can't pull out one thing and say that was the most enjoyable thing about making the series.

But when I drive down here and as I approach Port Isaac and see the sun setting over the sea, the view is breathtaking.

We have rented the same house each time we came to film, apart from for the first series when we had a swishy house in Rock. Our daughter Emily was a baby then, and we had Mary the cocker spaniel.

The changes in your own family life have been reflected around the cast and crew?

Emily was a baby when we first went to Port Isaac, and she is 23 now. She was born during the filming of Saving Grace, and she was a toddler when we made the Sky film which preceded the ITV series. She came down with us, and went to the local nursery in Wadebridge, now she drives herself down to Port Isaac. So it became her second home too. She has been to every single visitor attraction in the area more than once.

She had a walk on part and dubbed an 'ouch' on the sound, but acting is not her thing. When she was very tiny she found it very weird seeing me working on set with people all round me, make up artists patting your face, having your tie adjusted by a costume assistant. She would watch on the monitor, and when they said cut she would rush in and sort of grab me. It was like putting herself between it and me. She would say 'was that you who said that' about what she'd seen me do and say on the monitor.

Chris Bird the gaffer on this - I worked with his dad, the only gaffer to get an OBE, on Men Behaving Badly and Chris used to go onto set with his dad, and now Chris' boy Harry comes out with Chris. We have all bounced into each other's kids every other year.

Caroline's daughter was born between series, Jess has had two boys since she started on the series, Joe moved to Cornwall and has three children.

What changes to the village have you seen since you first began filming in Port Isaac. What has it been like filming in the village now with so many fans eager to watch the action?

There's more people, especially out of season. We generally try not to be here during the season because enough people were coming in. That has increased.

I very seldom go into Port Isaac without a crew so I am buffered. But there are people I know and faces I recognise in the crowds.

Even though there's more people, we can still film in the village we just need a little more man power than we used to have to hold the crowds back. They are generally sweet. In London people will try to mess you up during filming by beeping their car horns for example. You don't get that here. In fact when we are filming we marshall the traffic through the village.

Do people still bring their dogs for you to make a fuss of?

People know that I love dogs. It makes it much easier for everyone because there is no awkwardness about what to say. I never tire of meeting the dogs, and seeing how people are with their dogs, it just opens conversations rather than this uncomfortable thing of them asking for a picture with me. But if they can get a picture of me with their dog, they are over the moon.

We used to bring our own dogs to Cornwall, but Heidi is blind, and where we stay there are lots of levels so she would be falling down all day long, and they are fine at home.

What will you miss most about not returning to Port Isaac?

Just being here. It is a lovely place. Famously acting is a lot about standing around and waiting, and the amount of time I have spent outside that surgery, just standing waiting and gazing out to that view over the harbour and out to sea, I don't think there is any point in my own garden where I have stood that long. Driving myself to work every morning through the lanes, seeing the sea. Just the whole vibe.

Would you come back here if you weren't working?

Probably not. It would be a bit odd to be walking around Port Isaac when I am not working. When Emily was little and she was here with us, my mum would come down, and people would visit us here, and we would go out on down days. But now, may be because I am getting older, the minute I get some time off I go home because it is only two hours drive away. I don't really have down time. I always need something to do.

In series five you bought a horse while you were here?

Yes Ben Catel who I saw at the Royal Windsor Horse Show where I was for the Platinum Jubilee Pageant. We gave the horse to the costume designer on the early series. Ben is a Lusitano, a Portuguese dressage horse. We also bought Emily's pony Saracen from nearby Camelford where Emily went to the riding school there.

Do you have a souvenir from Port Isaac to remind you of your time there?

When we were building our farm I bought some Delabole slate to use. It looks really nice and when I look at it I can say 'I've earned that'.

Now ten series on what would be the souvenir you'd want to take away?

The Guide Dogs for the Blind spaniel model from outside the chemist - the gift shop which becomes the chemist shop in the series. It is one of those old models that you put money in to raise funds for the charity. It's owned by a prop house and is hired every time we film. Prop houses famously don't sell anything, so we will have to talk.

We have the Doc's car. We bought it, and although it is pretty old now it still looks great on camera.

What was it like to take part in the Platinum Jubilee celebration at the Royal Windsor Horse Show.

It was so lovely to see the reaction of the crowd to the Queen at the Platinum Jubilee Celebration at the Royal Windsor Horse Show. But you could also see that it was nice for the Queen. She was waving and leaning out to see people as she went round. She just loves the horses. The most poignant moment was when her own pony was led into the arena with a saddle on but no rider, and also when her granddaughter drove the Duke of Edinburgh's carriage into the arena.

What is next?

Next I am going back to the Pacific to explore more islands for a second documentary series, Islands of the Pacific for ITV - the first was shown earlier this year.

I've been asked to be president of the World Clydesdale Show in Aberdeen in October and I am going to take my two Clydesdales up with the carriage.

Caroline Catz plays Louisa Ellingham

It has been 18 years since you stepped onto the set of Doc Martin, what are your memories of that first series, and your impressions of Port Isaac

I do remember my first day on set. We were near Boscastle filming a wedding of two characters. They had been filming for two or three weeks so I was coming in at the middle of the block of filming.

It was just this lovely show which had a very particular feeling. It just had this lovely tone which was really difficult to describe, but it was very Doc Martin. At that point Martin and Louisa had bumped into each other way on a flight, then in a doorway, and then somewhere else. Then there was this scene at the wedding where they spotted each other across the room.

So you had no idea how popular it would become?

We thought it was just a one off.

We had no idea it would become so popular, and that it would go on all these years, and we would go on to have this relationship with this place (Port Isaac).

When the first series launched you described your character Louisa Glasson as “floral and pretty”, and you welcomed the chance to play a girly character, who falls for the new doctor in a small Cornish village.

There was a gentleness to her character but at the same time a strength. Certainly not that harsher quality some of the other characters I'd played had.

I have enjoyed doing comedy. I wanted to do something lighter after all the gruesome stories I have worked on, including my roles in The Vice, Murder in Suburbia, In Denial of Murder where I played the murder victim in a dramatisation of a true crime, and DCI Banks.

You had to learn a Cornish accent as well?

That has been learnt over the years, spending all the time we have had here, living in the village and being surrounded by local people. We had an accent coach at the very beginning. I got thrown in at the deep end with that one. But it is very interesting that everybody who lives in Cornwall seems to have a different tone, or different quality or strength to their accent. There isn't really one sound which is reflected in all the characters in the series.

Did you choose to live in a cottage in Port Isaac rather than stay at hotel so you could be more part of the village?

I was asked if I wanted to have a place in the village rather than stay at the hotel, and I said 'great'. It was more convenient and also it has been great to be part of the community.

So much has happened in my work life and my Doc Martin life since the very early days.

It was a very important job at a particular time in my life. I had one child who was very little, and I now have two children.

So it was just embarking on this lovely job, I had no idea that it was going to have the impact it has had. It was a lovely job, beautiful script, lovely character, great to work with Martin and a really great team

But we really had no idea how it was going to evolve and develop. I was very much drawn to this lovely tone it has of drama and comedy. It is light but it is clever, and just really good fun. That is what I was drawn to, and that was very different from the things I had been doing until that point.

There has been the long running on-off romance with the Doc, at the end of series three it looked as if they were going to marry but Louisa left him at the altar.

They reunited in series four, and Louisa became pregnant. In series five 12 babies made their TV debut playing the Louisa and the Doc's newborn son James Henry. They finally marry in series 6 in a grand church wedding at St Nonna's in Altarnun.

What has been amazing is how the relationship between Louisa and the Doc has evolved, because they were always at odds with one another. What was lovely about the series at one point was that Louisa was headmistress, he was Doc and they were living right across the bay, opposite one another.

They were in opposition to one another, and there was so much tension. There was always that thing of you can't get them together because you need that tension. That is what is so great about the show. Finding out what the quality is, it is not conventional comedy or drama. It has its own tone and what makes things funny.

What is nice is that we found a way to bring them together but still maintain their differences and individual quirks, and accept they love each other, even though they don't always connect.

That evolution of their relationship over the years is something I've really believed has been interesting, especially when the kids arrived. It really does show up their different approaches, so there is a whole fresh source of tension between them, which comes from the base line that they do love and support each other but they have different ways of approaching things.

Elliott Blake, who plays James Henry in series nine and ten is an amazing little actor. He started with us when he was three and he's now six. It's amazing how he has changed, but has still stayed consistent.

At three he was this bright brilliant little actor and at six he is still the same. He is natural and such a joy to have on set. He's a little poppet.

I got on really well with him, and we really bonded. When he arrived on his first day for this series I said Elliott 'do you remember me' and he said 'no not really it was three years ago and I was only three'. So we had to build up that relationship again, but it didn't take long.

Before that we'd had babies. At the beginning we had 12 babies playing James Henry, that was difficult. Sometimes there would be green rooms with loads of babies and loads of mums. You know what filming is like, you have to wait around, and babies don't wait for anything, so you needed 12 of them to ensure you had a baby who was smiling or crying. You had the whole gamut of emotions in those rooms.

Those babies are now eight. Two mums are good friends and their sons are in the same class at school. Some times they come as extras in the school playground. That is really sweet.

The babies playing Mary Elizabeth are absolutely adorable. Willow and Bette Pollard, Austyn and Everly Daniels, with their amazing mums.

You have been able to introduce your own passion for vintage fashion into your character's wardrobe - one of your favourite designers Justine Tabac, who specialises in designs using British vintage prints, designed a dress for Louisa. What influence did you have over what Louisa wore?

We have a brilliant costume designer, Stewart Meachem. I am madly, stupidly, into my clothes. It is quite a passion of mine. It's great working with Stewart and we have found some fantastic things for Louisa's wardrobe this year. We have been working with O Pioneers this year for Louisa's wardrobe.

What have been the highlights of the ten series

One of my favourite moments was a dream sequence when I was falling off a cliff, being suspended on a harness thirty foot up into the air in a quarry. That was an unforgettable moment.

The fantastic unique quality of it being shot on film. We must be the only programme in the country which still shoots on film. I am so glad we do. It really shows off the landscape, it really is embedded in the whole quality of the show, that visual element. It has a very romantic feel as a result of that, and timeless too. I think that really helps. I love the discipline of working with film. It is very focussing and feels very much part of this show.

What will you miss about Doc Martin?

I think the camaraderie between all the cast members, we know each other so well. We've all watched our families grow up and we have got to know each other really well from spending every other summer here. It is always a real joy when we get together for all the set pieces. There is a real ease about that. It is really lovely and I will miss that.

Also working with Martin. There is such a great relationship between Doc Martin and Louisa. It is very particular and we have found this quality they have which is really fun to play, and I will miss that. I will miss the fantastic sets. I was thinking I should get photos of all the sets. Imagining all the sets being pulled down is just overwhelming.

I was saying to Martin at the final readthrough that I have not absorbed the fact that this is the end, not properly. We are doing it, we are in the middle of it and I am just parking it. That idea of it being over is something I am not prepared to face, which is why I am finding it quite difficult looking back over the series, because it makes you realise what a massive part of our lives it has been. Also this incredibly unique job whereby you have got very other year available to work on other projects and then we all come back to Cornwall and Doc Martin because we love it, not because we have to, which is another unique aspect of this. It really has been a very special and unique time. I don't think I will ever be part of something like this again, not the way this works.

Will you maintain all the friendships you have made during the series?

I think it will be very difficult not to. We are so tied together. In that way it has been very special. What is also lovely is - with the 81 hours of television we have made - all the other actors coming through that time. We have great scripts and we get great actors drawn to it. We have had some amazing guest stars. So it is wonderful to get to play with all this people.

It is this lovely place where you get to meet people you've worked with before and people you'd like to work with. It is one of those jobs where you are happy to be here all the time.

What will you miss about Port Isaac and Cornwall?

It is so beautiful here. You can just walk up the the hill to the coast path and to Port Quin and to Polzeath. I don't have a car here so I walk when and where I can.

If I need a bit of air and a bit of space I walk up the coast path and it is the best view. It is an unbeatable cliff top walk. You can sit and watch the sun set there. All those things are beautiful perks of the job. I have started to go swimming in the sea. You get lovely ponds to swim in in London, but it is not the same as swimming in the sea.

I've been rowing with the Port Isaac rowing club, who were so welcoming. Then there's the pub quiz every Wednesday evening. That is always really fun, rowdy and raucous and bonds everybody. It is a very close knit set.

One of the things that has changed over the years is the amount of attention Doc Martin gets when you are filming in the village. Has it made it difficult for you to get out and about?

The other unique aspect of this whenever we are filming in the village it is like having a live studio audience. There are hundreds of people watching, it is quite extraordinary. At first it was quite overwhelming, now it is really lovely. The people who come and watch are people who absolutely love the show, and are enjoying being part of the filming. It is nice to meet the people who are real fans.

Being out and about in the village can be a bit busy when you are trying to get from a to b, but it is just great that people love the show, and you take it in your stride. They come from all over the world to watch us filming, what an amazing thing.

I can't get my head round how it has sold to so many countries. I still haven't seen any of the other Doc Martins. But maybe in years to come there will be Doc Martin conventions and we will get to meet all the other Doc Martins and Louisas.

Would you return to north Cornwall for a holiday?

At the moment I think it would be so odd to come back. But it is so much part of my life I can't imagine not coming back. All these places you slightly take for granted. The beautiful cliff path walks, the way it goes day to day, and how familiar a part of my life it is I am sure I won't be able to stay away too long.

What souvenir from Port Isaac would you take home to remember the series

My souvenir is the very happy time I've had and the brilliant experience of working in a very unique relaxed way. The show has its own quality which can't really be replicated, it has its own tone, and that is something we have all found together.

My souvenir is also that it can be easy, it can be really fun to make a drama and it can be a conducive and creative environment.

We have not had people breathing down our necks telling us what to do. We are left to our own devices, and dramatically and creatively that is absolutely brilliant. It is a very good model. That is the secret to the success of this. It stops at Philippa (Philippa Braithwaite, the producer) and it doesn't go beyond.

The model of how the show works is imprinted on me, and also it has been a very beautiful place to be that I will never forget and I will always have a relationship with with Cornwall and Port Isaac. It will always be part of my life. What a gift.

One 'souvenir' from Cornwall was your dog

Our first dog Jethro was from round the corner in Delabole. It was very sad when he died of cancer when he was five. Then Ziggy came into our lives. He is a rescue dog and also from Cornwall. So two Cornish dogs.

How do you feel about this being the last series?

The final readthrough was quite emotional. It was the first time we had all been together in one room, rather than over Zoom. There has not been any personal readthroughs for so long. I am finding it really hard to say goodbye to it, and to really absorb how many years it has actually been.

On set there is a painting of Port Isaac in Doc and Louisa's house I have my eye on before they strike the sets. There's a few little jars I also have my eye on too. Things that have been there in my peripheral vision for all those years. I'll be at the front of the queue for that painting.

What have you been doing between series nine and ten?

I wrote and directed a film for BBC called Delia Derbyshire: The Myths & The Legendary Tapes. I played Delia Derbyshire who composed the Dr Who theme tune. I was so fascinated by her music I was really drawn to her story. It was a project I had wanted to get off the ground for a while, and I was thrilled when we got a commission from the BBC. I am very proud of that. It was an exciting piece of work to be part of. It was broadcast last year and has been on iplayer for a year, and has been on the film circuit. It has been really exciting.

Last year I also did an Oscar Wilde adaptation, The Canterville Ghost which was a co production between BBC and an American network. It hasn't aired here yet.

Ian McNeice plays Bert Large

What do you remember about when you first started filming Doc Martin?

I remember having to walk into the surgery in the first ever episode and say to the Doc 'it would be really good if you could stay because we appreciate what you are doing'. Bert got him to stay which was amazing because if it wasn't for Bert we wouldn't have a Doc so that was really sweet. Over the years Bert's relationship with the Doc soured immensely because he got into so much angst and trouble with the Doc - he made everybody ill when he sold bottled water that was contaminated, flooded the surgery when he was trying to fix something, and all sorts of other things. There was a scene in the pub where Bert pretended to have been injured, poured ketchup over himself knowing that the Doc had a blood phobia. It is a rollercoaster of emotions Bert had with the Doc all the way through. Fantastic times.

In those early days did you ever imagine it could be this successful?

Absolutely not at all. What was very funny was that right from the word go when my agent rang me to say I had an interview for this job, I had this thumb rule that if it is just a one off thing I would wing it. But if it was a series it would be six months work and I'd try hard to get it. I turned up for the audition for Doc Martin and I hadn't bothered to learn the script. I just thought it was a one off. So I'm sitting there and read the first script, then they asked me to read a piece from another episode and that was when I realised it was actually a series of six episodes and that I should have tried harder. I walked out of the audition thinking I hadn't got the part, then that evening they offered me the role. So it was really lucky I got it. We finished the first series and everybody thought that would be it. We had no idea it would go on this long. Every single time we came to the end no one knew whether it was going to happen again because it was going to be hinged on the ratings. I used to find out if there was to be another series by ringing Robert Sloman, the farmer who rents out his land and buildings for the unit base, the studio and production office. So I would call him around December time as he would be the first to know whether we would be filming again, because they'd have to rent the barn for another year. Where else in Hollywood would you be ringing a farmer to find out if you'd got another year's work, It was brilliant.

Your character Bert Large ran the village plumbing business with his son Al, but not very successfully, and often created more problems than you solved - the surgery waiting room was flooded in one episode.

The joke about that was that I made it look as if I knew what I was doing but I never did a day's work - I'd be sitting there with a sandwich instructing my son how to do the job.

What are you like at DIY - have you picked up any skills during filming?

My own personal DIY skills are the same as Bert's - absolutely hopeless. It was a perfect fit from day one.

What have you most enjoyed about playing the role?

The opportunity to have tremendous fun with it. There were many facets. When Louisa returns having been away the first person to welcome her back is Bert. I think he has this fondness for everybody in the village. He has a heart of gold apart from the fact that he mucks everything up, including all the way through in series ten. There are some huge disasters coming in series ten which are of his making which is great.

Bert has had an array of jobs through out the series - he never seems to be short of ideas to make money but they don't seem to work for him

Large's restaurant, selling bottled water that gave everyone tummy upsets, distilling whisky...

He went from being a plumber and he had all sorts of little sidelines. There was the Bert Large birdwatching tours where he took birdwatchers to where there was a special bird that people could go and watch. He hadn't a clue. He ran the restaurant until he got into all sorts of trouble when his son left and the bailiffs turned up and threw him out.

When we had the set for Large's restaurant which was actually a house in the village with a terrace overlooking the harbour, holidaymakers would come to the entrance to try to book a table. Then he was working in the shop with Caitlin where she put her moves on him. And he got very worried about that.

He did DIY he was handing out flyers to people. He went to a job to put a bookcase up for someone and it all fell down.

Then there was the famous incident with the whisky. He was living in his caravan where he had a still. Ruth invested in the business. His mini distillery was shut down because PC Penhale told him he hadn't got a licence to do it.

He sold bottled water from a well that was contaminated and people in the village became ill, much to the Doc's annoyance.

Bert was never too successful at romance either?

There was romance for Bert with Jenny - played by Annabelle Apsion. He was going to propose to her. But she wrote him a Dear John letter and it was all over.

Then Caitlin came along. She was doing the napkins at the restaurant. He took her on a date and she got a bit hot and steamy which freaked out Bert and he backed off. Then they got locked in the cellar of the Crab and Lobster - Caitlin had taken over the management of the pub, and Bert was working for her. That night they became very close. But it all falls apart and in this series she throws him out. There's a wonderful scene where she is hurling his clothes out of the window, and he has to go and live with newly married Al and Morwenna. They don't want him there, and Bert ends up living in a caravan park.

What has been your relationship like with Joe Absolom who plays your son Al?

It is always tricky when you start working with someone you are going to have a close relationship with, wondering how it is going to be. It has been a pleasure working with Joe since day one.

He is a complete and utter natural, and very open to ideas and suggestions. He has a terrific sense of humour, and we just seemed to gel. I had not seen him in EastEnders, because I had been living in America, so I didn't know how high profile he was. It was only when people started pointing him out in restaurants in Cornwall that I realised.

Ian has two sons, Travers and Angus who are similar age to Joe. Ian was living in Los Angeles with his partner Cindy Franke, a production co-ordinator, who he met when they both worked on the Jim Carrey film Ace Ventura. They bought a property in London when he started work on Doc Martin. Ian has a daughter, Maisie, who is an artist, and has created paintings of Port Isaac which are sold in the local shops.

I suggested to Maisie that she did paintings of the well known hot spots in the village. She did these beautiful paintings, and in some of them she featured Bert in his familiar blue jersey. She displayed them in the Chapel Cafe in Port Isaac and people are buying them.

You became a an honorary resident of Port Isaac during filming and stayed in the same house each time?

I realised because of where we are and that so many people using it as a Mecca to see where Doc Martin is filmed, we are very recognisable in the village because people have seen the show. Everybody wants a photograph with you. So I decided to carry a bucket around with me when I went into the village and ask people to put a pound in the bucket to help the RNLI if they wanted a photo with me.

Over the years I've raised thousands of pounds for the RNLI. This year I've just presented a cheque to the RNLI for £3,000 and that was just from starting collecting in late February until June. Some people are very generous and have put in 5,10 and 20 pounds. Over the years I must have been collected more than £16,000.

The first lot of money went to the RNLI then I collected money for cancer relief. In the early days of filming I was asked to open the local fetes and dog shows. The Co-op re-opened and they asked me to officially open it by cutting the ribbon. There's an auction for their Christmas lights so I help out with that. I get things like signed scripts, clapperboards, the Large whisky. It really has just been trying to give back something to the village. Consequently we have got to know so many people. They have become our friends. The Fishermen's Friends signing group who used to perform every Friday evening on the Platt have become friends of ours. We have become part of the village.

Did you make the decision you wanted to stay in the village rather than head home to London at the end of each week's filming?

Part of the reason for this is because when we started my kids had pretty much left school. A lot of the cast are much younger than me and have had to look after children who are still at school, so they had to go back to London. But we made a conscious decision from day one to lock up our London home completely and come to Cornwall full time. All of our weekends were spent here, so really our life is here. That is why we have become part of the village because we are here all the time.

You've made your rental home very much a home from home, with numerous family photos and ornaments?

We are very fortunate, we had a deal with the production office that their truck taking down all the stuff from London would call off at our flat and pick up bags of our stuff to make it our home for the time we are here.

I contributed to the Port Isaac cookery book, and Cindy and I were invited to join the local church choir when they recorded Christmas carols.

Will it be sad to leave Port Isaac?

I think it will be very sad. That won't be it for us. We will definitely come down to Port Isaac again. We have come down a few times in the years when we are not filming. The RNLI invited us down when they launched their new lifeboat, which I'd put money towards. We came down just after lockdown and rented a house near Joe Absolom, my son and his wife, who we hadn't seen for a year came to stay, and we saw Joe, his wife Liz and their children quite a bit.

Joe and I have become - I always make this joke that Joe is the son I always wanted which really makes my own children very upset - that's a joke. We literally are like father and son we played golf the other day. We speak a lot when we are not filming. He's become a really close friend as have John Marquez and Jessica Ransom. We are all so fortunate that this cast has been good to each other and so good to work with.

I think it's a heads up to Philippa and Ben Bolt the original director who cast this bunch of actors who have been brilliant with each other all the way through.

It all stems from Martin because Martin is such a delight to work with and he sets the tone of the set.

I've made little books each year after every series with photos of all the actors who have appeared with a message from each of them, and they all say the same thing - what a joyous job - amazing crew - thank you for making me feel so welcome - I won't forget.

Everybody says what an incredible job it is, a job from heaven, and how nice everybody is and what a great time they've had. Martin is the key. He makes the set funny, makes the set a joy to work on.

The weather hasn't always been kind to you during filming. As well as glorious sunny days you've had storms and torrential rain.

Back in February when we were filming the Christmas special we had the hurricane. It was really dangerous at one point. We were filming in the studio in a barn at the farm and there were tiles coming off the roof. It was hairy. Cornish weather - there is no rhyme nor reason for it. One day it can be horrendous and the next glorious. That is why we have been so fortunate to have the use of the farm where they can change the schedule so quickly and move everybody there to do interior scenes when there's bad weather.

What have been the highlights of the ten series?

I suppose one of the biggest highlights was meeting Prince Charles. We suddenly got a phone call out of the blue saying please come to Port Isaac because Prince Charles would like to meet us all. He and the Duchess of Cornwall were coming to the village because the village had done some charity work that was linked up with the Duchess. We also heard that Doc Martin was one of her favourite shows and she had requested to meet the cast. We all waited at Nathan Outlaw's restaurant, and we were introduced to Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall there. She asked me 'how is your restaurant' and I said 'unfortunately it is closed at the moment because there is a bit of a salmonella scare' and she laughed at that. We weren't filming that year so we made a special journey to Port Isaac for the occasion.

What have been your favourite moments?

People often ask me what my favourite episode is, and it is the episode where Al is looking for his birth certificate and there is a question over is he or isn't he my son. It turns out he is my son but it gets a little edgy and emotional for both of us and we were both crying. That was a highlight. Also the Bert Large Lovers Group run by this extraordinary woman Gloria who now has more 4,000 members. Gloria arranges what she calls Bertstock when we are filming, with afternoon tea on a Sunday at the Old School House Hotel, then on Thursday she has a dinner. I turn up to some of the events, I don't go to all of them.

What will you miss most about the production and being in Port Isaac?

I will miss the chance to be in such a beautiful place for such a long time. It is just wonderful. Over the years my children have been able to experience this place. I have my son arriving today from San Francisco with his wife and my granddaughter, Ada May. Being able to spend time in this beautiful place with my family - they learned to surf and water ski here.

I will miss the opportunity of playing such an extraordinary character and all the adventures that that has given. This year there are two wonderful moments for Bert that go wrong. There is an episode in the caravan park where the shower block collapses and a huge explosion. There's a wonderful shot of Joe and another actor running away from this explosion. It's like something out of Armageddon.

What souvenir would you take home of your time on Doc Martin?

I think I am going to keep my little grey hat, and my blue jerkin. I always make a joke that my costume budget has always gone to Caroline Catz because I don't have anything new. I am still wearing the same costume I wore from day one with an occasional change of tie.

And something to remind you of Port Isaac?

From Port Isaac I will take some driftwood art. I love all that.

What have you been doing since the last series of Doc Martin?

I did a cameo on Ridley Scott film, Napoleon. Joaquin Phoenix is playing Napoleon, and I play Louis the 18th, which is a lovely funny character.

I also have a role in The Sandman, little cameos here and there.

What is next?

I think it is probably time to hang up my boots at 72 by the time this goes out. Cindy and I would like to travel. We would like to go to India, and may be a road trip of the States

Dame Eileen Atkins plays Ruth Ellingham

Dame Eileen Atkins joined the regular cast in series five in 2011 to play Ruth Ellingham, aunt of the Doc, and a criminal psychiatrist. She had travelled to Portwenn for the funeral of her sister Joan, who had left her her farm in her will, and she decided to stay.

You said when you first began filming Doc Martin that you had never watched the series, but became an instant fan having watched a box set?

I had vaguely heard of Doc Martin but I had never watched it. My husband Bill and I were given a box set. We watched one and my husband said straight away said 'I think this is lovely, absolutely charming, can we watch another one'. I thought it was lovely too. We did watch another box set, and I said I am definitely going to do this. It was a lovely surprise to find a series which I just happen to have watched.

Do you remember your arrival here and what you thought about Port Isaac?

I remember being nicely surprised about Port Isaac because a friend of mine had owned one of the houses here and told me I could stay in it any time I wanted to. My husband and I were totally hooked on the south coast of Cornwall. One night when we were staying on the south coast I suggested we went over to look at the place on the north coast. We came to Port Isaac on a very drizzly September/October evening and as we came down the hill he said 'I don't think we are going to like it here' and it did look very medieval and sombre just like any where in the drizzling rain, even the prettiest place. We drove down around the harbour and out the other side and decided we preferred the south coast.

So I was expecting not to like Port Isaac, and I was so knocked out by how pretty it was when I finally arrived to live here while I worked on Doc Martin. It is that awful thing - the sun makes all the difference in the world. But it is a remarkably pretty place.

It was enormous fun the first year I was here discovering all the little places I could walk to. Then I was a great walker, I can't walk so far now. I was so excited by the walks and the whole tone of the village which I thought was utterly charming.

Did you become acquainted with the village and the people?

I would say the only person better known in the village than me is Ian McNeice because he knows everybody. Then I became friendly with Ian so he was my first chum on the production and he introduced me to a lot of people.

Because I don't drive the first year I only had the the village supermarket to use. Then I used the bus. People would do double takes of me on the bus, that somehow someone on TV shouldn't be on the bus.

I now know quite a few people in the village because every day I do a bit of shopping in Port Isaac. The Co-op know me very well. I know most of the assistants by name. There is an art gallery and I got to know the couple who run that. Some times I sit with Ian when he is collecting for the RNLI.

Did you fall in love with Cornwall, as well as loving the series?

I have written to friends saying this is one of the most enjoyable jobs I have ever had. I stayed in a lovely house, with a fantastic view of Port Isaac and I could walk to my heart's content.

I have been in love with Cornwall since I was 19 when I came here with an acting company. It did make me want to live in Cornwall.

In the mid Fifties, having just left drama school Dame Eileen joined fellow students to form a co-operative to perform plays, living in a local school in Perranporth, and then moving to a house in nearby St Agnes.

We didn't have any money so we hitchhiked down to Cornwall. It was a very volatile, exciting time and we were quite ambitious in what plays we did. We used to take turns each day to run along the beach with a banner advertising to the holidaymakers what play we would be performing that evening, hoping it would rain so people would come in to watch, and we got them in.

Did you ever think you would move to Cornwall?

Yes, and actually my husband and I put down some money on a house there. It was a very tiny cottage with full sea views. The surveyor came back and said everything was fine about the cottage but he hadn't been able to assess one wall because the people next door wouldn't let him into their front garden to look at our wall.

We got a bit worried about that. So we came down to Cornwall and met the people next door. They were two fishermen, who were very nice, but they were not happy about people coming down and taking houses for second homes. I thought about it and thought 'they are right'. It

would be annoying if there was someone next door who only came to the house when they felt like a holiday. So we gave up on it. I absolutely understood why they were angry. We never found another place although we did look.

So I feel enormously lucky to have had this gift. I feel it is a total gift that I have been in Doc Martin. I have been here five lots of four months - 20 months. I have, in late life, the gift of not having to run a place. I come here and everything is laid on for me. I have a gorgeous cottage and all I have to do is work a few days.

Normally I stay here totally, but this year I have gone back to London a few times. This year has been fabulous -all kinds of people have come down to see me. I have had a wildly social time. The cast and crew sang happy birthday to me when I joined them for the weekly pub quiz.

What do you remember of when you first began playing the role of Ruth Ellingham?

She was so cross at the beginning. She came down to Portwenn for the funeral of her sister Joan, She had no intention of staying in Cornwall. She was very much a London person and had a very good job she was mad about. Then it was the thing she had to deal with her sister's farm which had been left to her, then she got to know Martin a bit because she hadn't known Martin that well. It's interesting that both Joan, played by Stephanie Cole, Martin and I all do have similarities, you would put us in the same family, by the way we play the parts. They don't show their emotions easily.

Then Ruth, who is always thinking of going back to London, rented a little cottage in the village. She couldn't stand her sister's old farm. So she stayed and didn't go back to London. I like to get the feeling, with my clothes, and everything, that I have never quite told myself I've settled in Cornwall, but I have settled.

This year is the first year, against my will I have been forced into wearing trousers for my character by the costume designer. I gave up and wore them for this last time. I have given in and Ruth is wearing trousers like every other woman in Cornwall. Up to now she has fought it by staying in her skirts as she would have done for her work in London. Her work now is more about writing thesis and books rather than meeting criminals in her job as a criminal psychiatrist.

With the new baby now for Martin and Louisa, Ruth seems to have become more involved with the family?

I think she does like it. She loves them. Elliott, who plays James Henry, is as smart as anything. I keep getting his name wrong and calling him Henry James. When I said to Martin 'doesn't anyone else call him Henry James by mistake' Martin said 'no, only you because you read too many books when you were young'.

What have been the highlights of playing the role?

I remember having an enormous bit of fun one day. I had an episode I really liked doing where Art Malik turns up and he plays my ex lover's son and I hear that my lover has died. We take the ashes out onto a cliff top. I was truly worried about being frozen that day. My only misery here is getting freezing cold. Life would have been perfect here if it hadn't been for how cold it can get at times.

It was a windy day, but sunny and a bit cold. The coastline is ravishing and where we were filming you couldn't see a soul.

The director, Nigel Cole, wanted a very dramatic scene when I scattered the ashes. I did it once and he said 'no 'I'm going to show you how to do it'. He did it and they all blew back in his face. He was such a good sport about it. We were so long with those scenes because we were helpless with laughter about not being able to throw the ashes. People often talk to me about that episode.

The other episode they talk to me about is when Ruth thinks she has Alzheimers.

What are your fondest moments or memories of the series ?

I do remember very clearly the moment when Ruth realised Art Malik was my ex lover's son, and therefore my lover must be dead. I remember exactly where I was standing in the Doc's surgery. It was a really significant episode for me.

If you were to take a souvenir from Port Isaac to remind you of the series what would it be. Do you have any souvenirs from your time in Cornwall.

There is an awful little bit of me that if I took a souvenir from Port Isaac I know when I got to London it wouldn't look right, but I love the seagull who visits me here every day on my balcony, and taps on the window. I love the birds at home in London where I look out at the river. I would love a little thing of a seagull.

It is strange to have this passion for water birds and then not be able to bear them coming into the house. They are so lovely to watch. I can watch the flight of the birds endlessly.

I never take photographs so I don't have photographs of the seagull to take away with me.

I never have photographs in my home. It's a silly thing. When I first started in the theatre and I went to successful actors' houses I thought it was outrageous that they had their bill posters on the wall and photographs everywhere and I thought if ever I do well I shall have nothing up because it is showing off, so you wouldn't know I was an actress if you came into my house.

I have always said that if you love something you remember it. Take it in and have it in your memory. But that's because I am old fashioned because photographs are the thing now.

The seagull will be in my mind forever. I can do a drawing of him. All these images are printed in my mind, the places I particularly like here. I will never forget this view, I don't need a photo of it.

I have bought some charming drawings of Port Isaac by Ian McNeice's daughter Maisie. They will remind me of Port Isaac.

I think you can tell by the book I wrote that I have a very strong memory. I have a massive imagination. I don't take a picture, I take it in my mind. I learn a bit by how something looks. My memory really doesn't need photographs.

What are your favourite spots/restaurants?

The Fish Kitchen on the Platt is my top favourite place. I just wish it was in London. I also love Rick Stein's in Padstow. I was thrilled when Rick Stein opened a restaurant in Barnes and I went there several times immediately it opened. But it is just not the same if you are not in Cornwall.

What happens to Ruth in this final series?

In this tenth series I am very onto Louisa's father who I have not met before and I am immediately suspicious of him. I think my main story is sussing him out. That has been fun because Louisa's father is played by Ken Cranham, who I have known forever. It was lovely acting with him. I really enjoyed working with an old friend. Art Malik was also a friend so I was terribly lucky.

Ken's big TV hit was a series called Shine on Harvey Moon. There is a woman who works in the Chapel Cafe in Port Isaac and she said to me 'I couldn't believe it, I saw Harvey Moon in the village'. That cheered up Ken that he was recognised from Harvey Moon.

What will you miss most about being in Cornwall?

It has been highly pleasurable. It was a lovely thing that very other year I would have four months of very nice work with really lovely people. Let's face it they just don't cast anybody who is not

going to be a decent person. You are not going to meet anybody horrible and then you just have a lovely social time as well. It really is perfect.

I was talking to my friend Sian Phillips last night and she said 'you are going to miss Cornwall 'and I said 'yes I am'. But of course if there was a next time I would be 90, and honestly you can't have somebody acting at 90. So I feel they just finished for me.

Joe Absolom plays Al Large

What do you remember about when you were first approached about playing the role of Al Large?

I remember sitting outside a pub in Greenwich reading the script. I think I had only two lines in the whole thing so I didn't really get a concept of what was going to happen to my character Al, but as an out of work actor you immediately like any script sent to you! You don't go, 'no this isn't for me 'you go 'I'm going to like this'.

I went for the audition and met the first director, Ben Bolt, and the producer Philippa Braithwaite. I wasn't exactly scared of Philippa, but she had such piercing eyes, I immediately had respect for her. I read the scene, and they said 'come to Cornwall'.

We used to live in Penzance when I was very young. I don't remember much about it, but my parents told me how nice Cornwall was."

It wasn't a place I really knew. We had tried to live there but my mum and dad couldn't get any work apart from picking cabbages so we left. So it was quite strange coming back to Cornwall, to Port Isaac, which I'd never heard of.

I remember arriving in Port Isaac in the dark after a very long drive, having no idea what the place looked like. Then I woke up the next morning to a sunny day in Port Isaac. I remember stepping out of the hotel and thinking it was amazing. I was pretty impressed by Port Isaac.

It has always been a really good fun shoot. The subject matter is fun. There's no murder and tears it is all kind of really light hearted but quality as well. That reflects on Martin, as fun as he is and a really nice bloke, that filters down. He is the number one dude and if he was miserable then everyone would be a bit difficult around him. But he is not. He is really good at the job, and he is one of the team so it makes it really fun. That filters down and everyone is relaxed and that comes from Martin and Philippa, the way they run the show and the people they employ. When you have to put 80 people together as a crew, you have got to get it right.

I never would have thought in 2022 we'd still be making the show. I don't think that far ahead anyway so it's quite amazing in one way but scary how we are still going.

Did you ever think in those first few episodes that it was going to be as popular as it has become?

No because I didn't have a concept of what was going to be good telly and I also think the character of Martin is definitely different from what we had in that first series. He has almost become a better caricature. He wasn't as grumpy, or surly, and all these things that happen to people as they get older has happened to Doc Martin, and has been accentuated with his awkwardness. I think Martin enjoys playing the role and plays it so well, and that has given the show the longevity. The way he runs through Port Isaac as Doc Martin, knocking people out of the way, always makes me laugh. I think he has honed that character every series. All the little characteristics that weren't necessarily there in the first series come naturally to him now. We had no concept of what we were going to be part of.

You were a real city boy before this Doc Martin and now your life has changed dramatically?

It has, and Doc Martin has given me lots of things that I love. Now I'm married, with three children, and living just a few miles from where Doc Martin is filmed.

We moved to Cornwall as a result of Doc Martin. We'd spend several months filming and go back to a place where I grew up and lived and you realised you don't have to go back (to London) you can actually stay there and branch out and think about other things. So we moved here and that's been phenomenal.

It has given me the ability to look after my children. We have had three kids since I started on Doc Martin and my oldest child, Lyla has just done her GCSEs. I know life goes on and moves quickly but when I take stock of what Doc Martin has given me it is phenomenal. It is a big part of my life, even though we haven't filmed it every year since we started. If we had filmed every year we would have burned out, and the village would have been fed up with us. Giving that eighteen months between each series has given space to breathe and create a better script.

Coming to Cornwall as an actor has given me lots and lots of good things.

Eighteen years ago I'd just bought my first flat and was getting to grips with DIY - with differing results. I had just moved out of my mum and dad's place, and bought a flat of my own. I'd also just met Liz, now my wife.

Even after the second series people were saying how lovely Cornwall is, but I just wasn't sold on it at first. I don't know whether it was just me getting older or things started to appeal to me. But now it's my home. Something changed. I don't know whether it was having kids.

Lyla was born in 2006, and she is now 15. She was ten weeks old when we did a one off two hour special of Doc Martin. I remember coming to Cornwall with this little baby, and it was just lovely. Casper is 11 and was born in London and Daisy was born in Cornwall in 2013, she's nine now. Lyla and Casper have had small roles in the series.

Will they follow in your footsteps?

Casper likes it and keeps asking whether the casting agent can get him on Stranger Things! He's up for it and wants to be an actor.

They were both in the wedding scene in the last series where Al and Morwenna were married.

Yes they were. Lyla was 12 then and she's 15 now and about to leave school. Casper was eight. They are proper Cornish - they have Cornish accents, although when we go back to London Casper says he's really a Londoner. Since we have been in Cornwall I have seen a lot of changes. A lot of the people we know have moved here - they weren't from Cornwall.

Liz and I got married in 2019 in Cornwall when we were filming the ninth series, and we've celebrated our third wedding anniversary this year.

As an actor it didn't mean the end of your career just because you weren't living in London any more?

Things have changed now. The days of going into Soho for 20 minute auditions are over. Casting directors now get people to send in audition tapes. Technology has moved on which allows me to live in Cornwall, and still be available within a few hours. I have no yearnings to go back to London. We have some good friends here and I really like it. It's peaceful.

When I'm filming in Port Isaac it is a different experience. When the show stops filming in July I never go into Port Isaac because it is busy.

One of the biggest changes is the number of people who come to Port Isaac to watch the filming. Does it cause you a problem?

One thing we've realised in the last few series is how popular the show is globally. Traditionally in Port Isaac the holiday season was during the school holidays. But now, with Doc Martin, people come from all over the world and Port Isaac is quite busy quite a lot of the time. There's a couple of coastguards from Nantucket who are extras on the show today.

Do you get stopped when you are trying to do your supermarket shopping?

Some times but most people know I'm part of the community and the children go to the local schools and my wife works locally. It is not really a big deal. If people say hello I always say hello back because that is why I am here.

What originally attracted you to the role?

I was attracted to the role because I wanted to work with Martin Clunes. It was a different role for me and a step away from the parts I had played before.

Joe left the role of unjustly jailed Matthew Rose in EastEnders in 2000 and played a wide range of roles including The Long Firm, POW, and Servants before joining the cast of Doc Martin.

I am really proud of my role in EastEnders. The next three jobs after EastEnders were period pieces, so it was good to get back to doing something in the present day with Doc Martin.

What are the highlights of the last 18 years for you?

The overall feeling is that we have had such a good time. I have so many good memories - like Fridays after filming finished everyone went down to the Platt in Port Isaac and the Fishermen's Friends were singing and there would be loads of people you are working with, and our families would come down. There's history between everyone now which is really nice. That is the fondest concept for me, the fact that we have all had such good times in this little village. It is just a tiny hamlet on the north coast, yet it has just got so much. We have had some great nights in the Golden Lion - which is the Crab and Lobster in the series, with people dancing and having fun, being together and having a good time.

Working with Ian McNeice has been a highlight. Jess and I did one episode where we were doing gig rowing. It was brilliant, the weather was great, and view at sea was amazing. We had three training sessions where we went out on this boat, and it was great fun. You thought 'we are getting paid to sit and row a boat'. There were moments where you stopped and thought 'this is really good'. Just filming on the Platt and having lots of people watching you is exciting, it is like theatre.

Driving into the farm where the unit base and production office is has been really special too. It is a working farm so some days you'd arrive and they'd be testing the cows.

We've had unit bases looking out over the sea, usually when you are filming the unit base is in a car park in North London and there's no view.

This series I get to jump in the sea to rescue someone - twice, and run away from a burning caravan which explodes.

Your character began the series as a plumber, now he has his own food truck serving Mexican food.

It is quite relevant because when we moved to Cornwall there were no food trucks, now there are. Things that happen in cities are now moving out to the sticks.

Do you have to do any cooking?

There's lots of squeezing of limes chopping coriander and peeling avocados. I like cooking but I think it would be out of character for Al to be a chef. The truck is great, very Doc Martin, all decorated with peppers.

What souvenir would you take to remind you of your time on Doc Martin?

Al's costumes have always been questionable, but there's a pair of boot cut jeans I've had since 2005 I'd like to take them and burn them! Maybe a bottle of Large whisky that Ian distilled. I have so many lovely memories of Port Isaac, pushing crying children in their buggies up the hills, and the fact we had Daisy here. There are loads of good times and I've met so many lovely people.

What will you miss about the production and Port Isaac?

It is sad that this is the last ever series. We have six weeks of filming left and the conversations I've had with Jess and Caroline are now about what we need to do before the end of filming because it is rare that we will come to Port Isaac as a group.

Caroline wants to jump in the sea, so we are going to do that. Jess has never had a pint of Rattler(beer), someone mentioned kayaking.

I will miss not having everyone in the village. Having Ian in the village - the guy has been playing my dad for 18 years so we are very close. In the past when we have finished filming we have never had to say goodbye to anyone. I will miss the fact that we are not getting back together again, so it is important to say thank you and goodbye to people which I am not very good at. I will miss the potential of having everyone back. Port Isaac with everyone in it is a different place without them.

I feel like it is a place that is very dear to my heart because when everyone is here, sometimes not knowing whether we would get back together for another series was really good. Now we know there will not be another series is forcing us down a different path.

With Ian playing your dad - he once described you as the son he never had - jokingly. You have become very close do you keep in touch when you're not filming?

Yes we do. He has seen my kids grow up. He had a holiday cottage down here last year when we weren't filming. Whenever he sees our kids he gives them a tenner, so they really like him! There are people I will definitely keep in touch with.

You don't feel like you are making iconic television but then you talk to the fans and they are mad about it.

What have you been doing since the last series?

I did the series The Bay, I did Confession and was nominated for a BAFTA for that.

What is next for you?

I am going on a stage tour with The Shawshank Redemption, playing the lead role of Andy Dufresne. I've never done a stage tour as an actor. I've only done one play so I think it is a good thing to try something different. It opens on August 31 at the Theatre Royal, Windsor. I want to see if it is something I like. I was inspired by seeing Eddie Izzard doing a performance of Great

Expectations on his own at a venue in Cornwall. After seeing that I messaged my agent to see if there was something I could do on the stage. I feel I should test myself a bit.

Jessica Ransom plays Morwenna Newcross

You joined Doc Martin in series five in 2011 as the new surgery receptionist Morwenna Newcross. What was it like joining an established and popular series?

When I first started I auditioned for what I was told was the last ever series of Doc Martin, and now five series later we are making the last ever series of Doc Martin. So I didn't have any idea that it would be this long a gig.

I knew that obviously Lucy Punch and Katherine Parkinson, and particularly Katherine Parkinson because she had been on it for three series and Lucy Punch had done one series, that I had to bring something different to it, but also also fulfil the expectation of what the receptionist does and how she interacts with the Doc.

But I think Morwenna as a character has developed over time. I have had more and more to do across the series. We have seen more about her home life, she's got married to Al and she has a more developed relationship with the Doc. So it has really grown over the six series I've been in.

Jessica was already well known on the comedy circuit for her one woman stage shows, and her appearances in the Alexander and Miller Show. But Doc Martin is her first dramatic role on television. This was your debut in television drama after your early career as a comedy actress was it a bit daunting?

This was my first TV drama, so it was a big call and completely different from what I have been doing. I didn't allow myself the possibility of daydreaming about getting the job at all. I thought it was dangerous to start thinking, 'I will go and live in Cornwall for four months, it will be wonderful'.

Coming onto something like this, which is established and popular, was quite daunting. Also Lucy Punch and Katherine Parkinson, who played the previous receptionists are doing amazing things, so it felt like big shoes to fill. But everybody was very welcoming.

What was your character like when you first started ?

Morwenna was quite mouthy, didn't suffer fools, and didn't mince her words. She has grown up in the village and as a teenager she was a leader of the bevy- the gang of giggling girls on the street of the village, laughing at everything the Doc said and sneering at people, and being a bit mean, but in a lighthearted way, not in a trouble making way.

She lived with her granddad, who she is very close to. Granddad was played by the legendary Peter Vaughan. It was pretty amazing to work with him.

Morwenna was so much fun to play; she had an attitude to everything. But she wanted to stick at a job because she is fed up with being fired for mouthing off.

You quickly had to get used to wearing some extraordinary costumes for the role, along with lots of jewellery and make up which isn't your own style at all?

Yes and it has - it is still pretty quirky but it is less mad which has come partly through a change of costume designer and partly through I think the character seems a bit more mature. I certainly am older than I was then. I think now it feels less mad. There's something quite eccentric about the things Morwenna wears but it has definitely chilled out a bit and is less wacky over time.

Do you feel more comfortable about what you have to wear for the character?

I have never really minded because I think it is just really fun to dress up and to wear things you'd never wear yourself. I probably have more things I feel self-conscious about now than I did then. I have had two children since I made that first series so certainly I feel now I can say 'that would suit me better than that'.

It has always been collaborative with the costume designer. We would get our heads together about Morwenna's costumes. They have definitely evolved over time.

At the end of series will you be taking home any items from Morwenna's wardrobe?

I have my eye on a couple of things. There's a slightly eggy thing I always think as an actor you have worn something lovely in a show as an actor, if you wear it in real life people are going to think 'oh there she is, desperate to be recognised'. Of course nobody cares or notices, but I feel self-conscious wearing things I've worn on telly.

Morwenna has worn some pretty extraordinary outfits: little tiny hot pants and things that are quite far away from me. She is not someone who worries particularly about clashing colours. She always wears more jewellery than is necessary, and lots of flowers in her hair.

How did you master the Cornish accent?

I learnt lots about playing Morwenna by catching the bus to nearby Wadebridge and listening to people talking to each other. You can get a lot by just observing people.

I took driving lessons when I was in Cornwall and even my driving instructor helped me to master a Cornish accent.

Sheffield born Jessica went to Birmingham University before moving to London to start her comedy career, writing her own material for one woman shows. She met her boyfriend Ben Wilson while they were at university, and he is also in a comedy sketch group. Ben proposed to Jessica in February 2011 and they married in Sheffield at the end of September that year. The couple live in London but share a dream to live by the sea one day.

You faced another challenge when you started working on Doc Martin: arranging your wedding. You were writing your wedding invitations during breaks from filming.

While I was working on that first series of Doc Martin I was planning our wedding and going back to Sheffield for food tastings and to sort out my wedding dress. I sat in my trailer on set writing out the wedding invitations."

Since the first series of this, I have got married, I have moved house three times and I have had two children, so life is really different. Because it has been across 11 years and if they give you a year off you are going to have a baby. So things have changed, but a lot is the same, and also it feels like it has been part of of my life for such a significant part of my life.

Jessica's first son Frank, six, was born in 2016 between series 7 and 8, and second son, four year old, Arthur was born in May 2018 between series 8 and 9.

Will you miss Cornwall?

My boys will miss it, just as much as I will. Frank was here for a series when he was one, and when he was three, then I had Arthur. This time because they have been at school they are both at home in London but they are here for the whole holidays. They know where I work, and they know Cornwall, and that it is not just a place where you go on holiday, but it is where I work and

where I have been living for part of this year. So it is going to be a big thing for us to all not to have this ready made period of time where we are forced to spend time in a beautiful place. We have done all the touristy things in Cornwall, and now if people come to visit we know what a gold standard lovely weather day out is, we know wet weather days out are, we know where we are going to take people to eat. I am going to miss doing all those things.

Would you come back to Cornwall for a holiday?

We will definitely come back because Port Isaac is such a lovely place. Imagine if I hadn't got this job we would never have known about this place.

I think what is different about coming for a weekend or a week's holiday is you don't get those lovely interactions you get from being here for a long period of time, like with neighbours, people in the shop, people in the pub.

You have also found time to take part in Marathons?

I have done seven marathons during the course of the five series. I have done the London marathon five times, as well as York and Brighton. I did the Brighton marathon in April this year when we were filming. I worked the next day and they were such bullies to me, making me move to pick things up when I was in agony. I did lots of running on the South West coastal trail in preparation for each of the marathons. I am not doing London marathon this year, but I will probably do it next year. I have maintained my times.

What happens to Morwenna in series 10

She's has to find herself new employment with the local estate agent because the Doc is not the Doc when we start the series. It is not a job she enjoys because Samantha Trapp, the boss gives her a hard time despite Morwenna being very efficient and good at the job Samantha really tries to test her.

She ends up coming back to work with the Doc because he has taken on someone who is not very good, and she steps in to save the day and sort out reception really quickly. He asks her to come back but she makes him work for it a bit, she's not just going to bow down to him.

She and Al are happily married and living together. Bert comes to live with them and it's like having a great big child. It is really like Al and Morwenna are Bert's parents.

What are the highlights and memorable moments of the last five series?

Doing all the stuff rowing was amazing because we were out on a boat for a day. Crashing on a life boat when we were out on the south coast of Cornwall with Dan Ryan and Robyn Addison. Getting married and having a big wedding on the Platt that was pretty wonderful. The big outdoor scenes even though I will miss being in the surgery, those big adventure things have been really fun to film.

Had you done rowing before?

I had been out on the gigs because Port Isaac rowing club let us have a go, but this meant we got to take it quite seriously, as I did. That was great fun.

Is there a favourite personal moment you will never forget?

There is a bit filming Christmas where we were doing a night shoot on the Platt and it was night time and it was February. The Christmas lights were up and it was really amazing because I had never seen the village look like that before because obviously we are here through the Spring and Summer months. So doing a scene with Joe on The Platt at Christmas time was really special.

What will you miss about Doc Martin and Cornwall?

What I will miss is the people and being in a really familiar and comfortable working environment. Every thing becomes that over time, but we have been doing it for so long you feel really at ease and you feel you can be at your best because you are really well supported and everybody knows each other and it is - obviously there are times when there is pressure to get things finished, but it is all in such a comfortable environment because you know everybody.

We all go to the pub together on a Wednesday. On days off when you are in the village for the weekend you see a load of people from work on the beach or in the pub - it is just that sense of community that you don't get on anything else. It is really special because you don't just go home, after a day's filming, you are here and everyone becomes part of the community and the crew and cast have their own community. I have got to know people in the village from being here. This area is just so beautiful. You can sit and look out of the window, and look at a scene and think I don't need to put the telly on because I can just look at the nice view, even when it is chucking down with rain. The scenery and getting to know all the quirks, having a favourite spot on the beach or knowing what time of day is best to go swimming in the sea.

What souvenir of Port Isaac would you take back to London with you ?

I am going to steal the painting next to Morwenna's desk, don't tell anyone. It is a horrible painting of a dog next to my desk that has been there all the time. I have spent so much time looking at it I'm going to have it. I think that would be a nice memento. We have got lots of Port Isaac things at home. My children have brought home most of the beach, I'm always finding stones and shells in my pockets.

You have said that you and Ben would love to live by the sea, is it a dream that could be realised?

I think it is a faraway dream. I love being here, but I think our life is in London. We really like where we live, but that doesn't mean we won't miss it here, an awful lot.

Will it be a sad moment when you film your last scene?

I am going to be an absolute mess. I don't really know - it is so weird, you think 'it is just a job, it is just ending the people are still here and the place is still here. But I got sad when I did my last scenes in previous series I suppose because we haven't necessarily known that it was coming back But it does feel very different this time, it feels very final, so it's going to be a tough day. I am taking one day at a time. We are all making lists of what we need to do before we finish; we need to eat there, and see these people. It feels like the sands of time are slipping away now it is about to stop. The last scene is all of us together

Will you keep in touch with everybody?

Yes I have kept in touch with lots of people between series anyway. I have already got really close friends from this job, and hopefully they will still want to talk to me when it is over.

What's next for you?

I am filming Horrible Histories pretty much straight after this, and that is another thing I have been doing for a really long time. It is nice to go onto something else that is so familiar with people I know. It is a very different thing, it is made in London and you don't get the scenery or the luxury of time that you do on Doc Martin.

LOOKING BACK OVER TEN SERIES

Martin Clunes made his debut as surgeon Martin Ellingham in the first series of Doc Martin which was filmed in the spring and summer of 2004, and launched in September 2004, attracting more than nine million viewers.

The surly surgeon, whose glittering career came crashing down around him when he developed a blood phobia which prevented him conducting operations, had to make a life changing decision to retrain as a GP. He applied for a vacant post in the sleepy Cornish hamlet of Portwenn, where he spent childhood holidays.

If the patients were expecting tea and sympathy from their curmudgeonly GP they were disappointed. Despite his surgical brilliance, he had no personal skills, and his understanding of humans was practically non-existent.

Dr Ellingham, or Doc Martin, as the locals referred to him, much to his disgust, found the surgery in disarray. The medical equipment was beyond repair, and the patients' records were a mess. To top it all he inherited the world's most incompetent receptionist, Elaine Denham, played by Lucy Punch.

The community was united in horror at their new GP. Doc Martin needed all the allies he could get as he tried to negotiate his way around village life with hilarious consequences.

Martin was joined by a prestigious cast which included Caroline Catz (Murder in Suburbia, In Denial of Murder, The Vice) who played primary school headmistress Louisa Glasson. Doc Martin was attracted to her, but he was hopeless at personal relationships, Stephanie Cole (Waiting for God, A Bit of a Do, Tenko) as his Aunt Joan, who provided him with emotional support in the face of the disquiet among the villagers.

Ian McNeice and Joe Absolom starred as father and son, Bert and Al Large, who tried to sort out Portwenn's plumbing problems.

The guest stars included Celia Imrie, Richard Johnson, Ben Miller, John Alderton, Jeff Rawle and Stephanie Leonidas.

The first six part series was created and written by Dominic Minghella.

Producer Philippa Braithwaite described the series at its launch: "The series is fresh and different. The idea of playing a grumpy, socially inept doctor appealed to Martin.

"We liked the idea of reversing the usual 'fish out of water' scenario which can happen when a 'townie' settles in a small rural place. Instead of the village appearing strange and unusual, in our series it is the incoming doctor who is the quirky character, whom the inhabitants find hard to fathom.

"We are thrilled to have been able to film the entire series on location in Cornwall to bring Portwenn to life."

Martin Clunes confessed he revelled in the surliness of Dr Martin Ellingham, the GP with no bedside manner.

Even the cast and crew were shocked by the vitriol with which Martin delivered his lines as a character who has no people skills, and no sympathy.

"I loved being loathsome, it was very liberating!" Martin said of his character in the first series "In one scene I had to shout at a woman in the street to get out of my way. I made the poor woman jump, and the crew were quite taken aback too."

Martin became as meticulous as his character in his portrayal of the role. As Doc Martin is a man who prepares his own sushi, Martin took a short boat ride from nearby Rock to Padstow to learn how to prepare fish at Rick Stein's seafood cookery school.

"I got so involved in the character, and portraying him properly that I even insisted that they should use my hands in a scene where my character has to conduct an emergency operation. They needed my expertise!"

His on screen skills as a GP became so convincing that cast and crew would often seek his advice on medical matters. Real life GP Dr Martin Scurr has been the medical adviser for every series.

In the opening episode of the first series the Doc meets Louisa Glasson for the first time as he is travelling from London to Cornwall by plane to attend the interview for Portwenn's new GP. Louisa found the man sitting opposite her on the plane staring at her in a strange and predatory way. When she arrived to take part in the interview panel she saw the man being interviewed for the GP's post is Dr Martin Ellingham -the strange man on the plane.

Caroline Catz explains: "Louisa was very much against Martin Ellingham being chosen because of her experience of him. In the interview she thinks he is arrogant, and she is very suspicious of why on earth he would want the position after being a top surgeon at a busy London hospital. But she is outvoted by the other members of the panel. She warns him not to cross the line with people in the village.

"But Louisa is intrigued by him, and her feelings change towards him. She realises she has completely misjudged him and taken him at face value. Although he does have his failings and foibles, he actually is a very good doctor and a kind person who she becomes very attached to him in spite of herself."

The early series followed their on off romance, including Louisa jilting the Doc at the altar in series three, having a baby boy - James Henry in series four, to them finally marrying in series six.

The series has attracted thousands of fans over the years, many of whom have formed fan clubs on social media, including the Clunatics and the Bert Large Lovers.

The fans regularly showed their appreciation by showering the cast and crew with presents, including a Lego Doc Martin complete with doctor's syringe and dog, a Buddha, a medicine bottle full of sweets and numerous paintings.

PORT ISAAC PLAYS PORTWENN

The historic fishing village of Port Isaac, on the north Cornwall coast, has played the part of Portwenn in Doc Martin.

Registered as a fishing village in 1338, Port Isaac has always offered the safest harbour along this part of the coast, a vital refuge from Atlantic storms.

But it also provided the perfect backdrop for filming. Its plethora of holiday cottages became temporary homes for the cast and crew, and local people were used as extras.

The Platt, the Cornish name for a market square, is at the heart of the village, by the harbour, and was the location for many special events during the ten series including a lifeboat day gala in the

first episode of Doc Martin, and the wedding of Al Large (Joe Absolom) and Morwenna Newcross (Jessica Ransom) in series nine.

The Old School Hotel and Restaurant was returned to its former purpose, as Portwenn's primary school, where Caroline Catz's character, Louisa Glasson taught and became headmistress. The old school, built in 1877 closed in 1976.

The exterior of the doctor's surgery is a detached cottage up a steep hill overlooking the harbour, and with stunning views out to sea. It has been much photographed over the years, and has been a holiday cottage, before going on the market this year.

The Golden Lion, the only actual pub in the village, became the Crab and Lobster in Doc Martin. The interior of the 18th century building was taken over by cast and crew for several days during the shooting.

The Harbour Treats gift shop was transformed into the local pharmacy, run by Mrs Tishell, played by Selina Cadell. The village hall was the setting for various scenes, and a barn on the outskirts of the village was converted into a studio for some of the interior scenes and unit base for all the production vehicles and facilities.

Port Isaac is the one of the most remote villages in the UK- the nearest town, Wadebridge, is ten miles away. In 1820 it was described as "secluded from the rest of the world". Access to the village is via narrow winding roads, which will only allow one vehicle at a time. So much of the movement between locations was done on foot.

Guest stars in the last nine series:

Series one (2004): Celia Imrie as Lady Susan Brading whose husband Gilbert Spencer (Richard Johnson) has been using her hormone cream with embarrassing side effects. John Alderton as an old flame of the Doc's Aunt Joan

Series Two (2005): Claire Bloom plays the Doc's mother Margaret, and John Woodvine plays his father Christopher. Ben Miller plays a crazy park ranger Stewart. Felicity Montagu as local radio presenter Caroline Brown. Roger Lloyd pack as irate husband Philip Pratt who accuses Doc of killing his wife. Katherine Parkinson joins as the Doc's new receptionist, Pauline.

One off special (2006): Kenneth Cranham as Louisa's dad Terry who left the village under a cloud after stealing charity money. Chris O'Dowd as Jonathan Crozier as a dodgy newcomer to the village.

Series Three (2007): John Marquez joins the cast as new police officer Joe Penhale, taking over the role from Stewart Wright who was PC Mark Mylow

Series Four(2009): Lia Williams plays Dr Edith Montgomery who had a relationship with Doc and broke his heart. Dodger, a Jack Russell rescue dog from the Dogs Trust joins the cast as Buddy.

Series Five (2011): Dame Eileen Atkins joins the cast as Doc's Aunt Ruth, Jessica Ransom makes her debut as Doc's receptionist Morwenna Newcross, Joanna Scanlon as newly qualified GP Di Dibbs who steps in when Doc has to leave. Miriam Margoyles plays a farmer. Anne Reid plays Florence Dingle who runs a cat sanctuary

Series Six (2013): Annabelle Apsion plays the new pharmacist, who breaks Bert Large's heart, Paul Moriarty, as mystery man Robert Campbell who's found collapsed on the beach, Ronald Pickup as John Moysey, a grumpy neighbour of Ruth's.

Series Seven (2015): Sigourney Weaver has a cameo role as an American tourist, thanks to her close friendship with Selina Cadell. She became a fan of the show and told Selina how much she liked it. Robyn Addison joins the cast as nanny Janice Bone. Caroline Quentin plays eccentric vet Angela Sim. Gemma Jones as Annie Winton who resorts to drastic measures to make the Doc help her sick husband, and Finty Williams as Portwenn newcomer Debbie Sharrock.

Series Eight. (2017): Sigourney Weaver returns to reprise her role as an American tourist. Art Malik plays a visitor who has information about someone from Ruth's past.

Series Nine (2019): Caroline Quentin as vet Angela Sim, Tom Conti as an eminent surgeon, and Conleth Hill as a GP both assessing Doc for his competence to continue as a GP. Danny Huston as a tourist who steals eggs from a local farmer. Queen drummer Roger Taylor was extra in a scene outside the police station.

Key story lines

Series One

Dr Martin Ellingham spots an eye condition in the woman sitting opposite him as he travels to Cornwall. Local schoolteacher Louisa Glasson is so disturbed by the man staring at her that she moves seats only to find she has to meet him again at the interview panel for Portwenn's new GP. The Doc's first patient is a curmudgeonly colonel, with an embarrassing problem- he's grown breasts. Father and son plumbers, Bert and Al Large, are summoned by Martin to sort out a plumbing crisis in the surgery. But their skills are about as good as Martin's bedside manner, and soon there's water gushing everywhere.

Series Two

The Doc's mother and father pay him an unexpected visit and The Doc has to deal with a crazy park ranger who thinks he has a giant red squirrel.

One off special

Louisa's father Terry, who left the village under a cloud, returns. Bert organises a visit for bird watchers with disastrous results.

Series Three

The Doc and Louisa are due to marry, but she leaves him standing at the altar. PC Joe Penhale becomes the village's new police officer.

Series Four

A former medical school acquaintance of the Doc's, who broke his heart, arrives in the village. Louisa returns to the village after fleeing the gossip about their failed wedding, to tell the Doc she is pregnant.

Series Five

The Doc's Aunt Joan has died, and her sister Ruth arrives from London to attend her funeral, to find she has been left a farm. She has no intention of staying in Cornwall at first. Twelve babies from Cornwall made their television debuts in series five as the newborn son of the Doc and Louisa. The baby was named after Martin's Jack Russell terrier James Henry, known as Jimmy. The Doc and Louisa's second child, born between episodes nine and ten, is named Mary Elizabeth, named after Martin's beloved first golden cocker spaniel.

Series Six

The Doc and Louisa finally marry in series 6, having been brought closer together by the kidnap of their son James Henry by the deranged pharmacist Mrs Tishell at the end of series five. They had

a white wedding, filmed at St Nonna's Church in the tiny hamlet of Altarnun near Bodmin, known as the cathedral of the moors. It was so cold that a thermal lining had to be stitched into Caroline Catz's wedding dress.

Series Seven

The Doc and Louisa are struggling to maintain marital harmony, so Louisa decides to take James Henry to Spain where her mother lives, to give the couple some space. The Doc is heartbroken by their departure and realises he has to make changes if he wants them back.

Bert and Al's restaurant business is teetering on the verge of bankruptcy, and they both look at new business ideas- Al with a b and b, Bert distilling whisky, with some financial help from Ruth. Robyn Addison joins the series as new nanny Janice Bone, which reunites her with long time friend in real life Jessica Ransom.

150 babies auditioned for the role of the 11 month old James Henry. The four who were chosen to play the toddler were Archer Langridge, Harry Rossi Collins, Maverick Bentley and Olly Gard. Archer and Harry, along with their mums Nicola and Gill, remained friends. The boys are in the same class at school and celebrated their eighth birthdays this year.

Caroline Quentin guest stars as vet Angela Sim, a role specially written for her. It's the first time Caroline and Martin have worked together for 17 years since Men Behaving Badly.

Hollywood star Sigourney Weaver has a cameo role as America tourist Beth Traywick

Series Eight

Wedding bells are ringing for PC Penhale and nanny Janice Bone after a whirlwind romance.

A new dog joins the series Paddy plays Bob who pals up with Buddy played by Dodger much to the annoyance of the Doc.

Louisa leaves her job as headmistress to study child therapy and counselling.

Dame Eileen Atkins was reunited with fellow Upstairs Downstairs actor Art Malik who plays the son of a man who had an affair with Ruth and has come to Portwenn to scatter his father's ashes.

Series Nine

The Doc's medical career is still under scrutiny as he awaits a final assessment from the GMC.

Al is now manager of the Crab and Lobster, running it with his father Bert. But the owner decides to sell leaving Al and Bert with nowhere to go.

Al proposes to Morwenna, twice - once by accident and the second time for real. Their wedding is held in the harbour in the last episode, with the Doc walking Morwenna down the aisle.

PC Penhale is called to a shooting in Portwenn. A farmer has shot a camper for stealing eggs.

