

# THE REAL McGOOHAN

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—behind  
the  
'Danger  
Man'  
image

**J**UST who is Patrick McGooohan? This isn't such an odd question as it sounds. Viewers had known for quite some years that the stocky six-foot Irishman was the tough, monosyllabic secret agent hero of "Danger Man".

But where was Patrick born? What of his childhood? What were his hard early struggles to get known in show-business? What of his private life—if, indeed, this decidedly reticent character could be said to have one?

And who were the people who had worked with him in various jobs before John Drake was even a twinkle in a scriptwriter's eye?

For a long time, Pat just wasn't telling.

He once said: "I don't happen to believe that an actor need go telling all and sundry about himself."

Of John Drake, he is modest without being deprecating. "I play a sort of cops - and - robbers knight errant. It's fun. I enjoy it. Let's leave it at that, shall we?"

Quite a few journalists didn't want to leave it at that. They wanted to inter-

continued overleaf



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view Pat on the *Danger Man* set. Photographers wanted to take photographs of him at home.

A few well-trusted friends were allowed to write carefully non-committal articles. On the whole, though, the *Danger Man* set had a permanent notice up: "No admittance!"

Then, very gradually, McGooohan raised his own iron-curtain. A large circulation woman's magazine ran his life story with family-album pictures. A television magazine had several articles about the star, but they had to be written by a journalist of Pat's own choice.

When *Danger Man* was first announced for production as a half-hour film series, a publicity executive said: "This man McGooohan is going to be a very big star."

Maybe. But the artistes who worked with Pat often found him a mixed blessing.

"My God," exclaimed one actress who during scenes had tried her best to make him conscious of her not inconsiderable sex appeal. "Is that man cold!"

Maybe "cold" isn't quite the right word. But if you described Pat as in introvert you would certainly have something. He has a very definite conception of just the sort of personality John Drake should be. In a way, the two men are much alike.

"John Drake is a machine-man doing a job in a machine-age. He must keep his emotions utterly under control. He can show surprise, even humour. But any deep feelings would interfere with his job."

Not that Pat is a cold fish. Sarah Lawson, actress wife of Patrick Allen, has appeared with McGooohan.

"I liked his sense of humour," she recalls. "He is fantastically strong and dependable. His strength, so to speak, is on the inside. He isn't a sort of showy, superficial muscleman."

Starlet Dorothy White enthused over his eyes. "I have never seen such beautiful eyes in a man. They are bluer than the Mediterranean."

Hollywood actress Beverly Garland summed Pat up as "one of the best-looking men I've ever played opposite."

## THE FOOLS WHO STEPPED IN

FOR all his appearance of being the dedicated, super-professional performer who approaches his work with scientific detachment, Pat does become solely absorbed with his playing of John Drake.

Any interruption to a finely

judged performance can throw him off balance. On the set, he is apt to be edgy, curt. And he doesn't suffer fools gladly. When a photographer unwisely tried to take pictures in the middle of an important scene, there was nearly an explosion.

One woman journalist, who had been sent to interview Pat, made it clear she had never heard of McGooohan or *Danger Man*—and, what's more, wasn't all that interested. Her meeting with the star lasted just five minutes...

Although *Danger Man* doesn't sell viewers short on fisticuffs and punch-ups, Pat is keen to stress his dislike of violence. His personal philosophy seems to be: no man should start a fight. If he's involved in one he should hit out only to end the whole business.

Many years ago, Pat had a job in an all-night milk bar in London's Fleet Street.

One night, two customers started a scrap. There was a crash of crockery and a flurry of fists.

Pat saw no reason to risk his job by joining in. He dodged quickly out of the back door until the fight was over!

Being a waiter was but one of a string of "stop gaps" while he was waiting for stage parts. He earned £13 a week. But, he reflected, it was a lot better than wrapping choc ices—the job he'd endured just before.

Then, success as an actor couldn't be more remote. When he did get a West End part it was in a play which folded after a couple of weeks.

"If I'd been on my own, it wouldn't have been so bad," he recalls. "But I hadn't been married long and my wife was expecting our first baby. I had to take any sort of work that was going."



Off-screen, Pat  
keeps away from  
punch-ups

It wasn't exactly a basis for a happy, lasting marriage. But Pat has always stressed his good luck in having a wife who understood his ambitions. Pat and his wife couldn't have had more different backgrounds. Joan, half-Viennese and half-Scots, was the actress daughter of a Hampstead lawyer.

## SOMETHING TO STRIVE FOR

FOR Pat, life had always been hard — racked with uncertainties. With a wry grin, he recalls his very first stage appearance—at a youth club in Solly Street, Sheffield.

"I was sixteen then. They asked me to appear in a club play. I wasn't keen, but they assured me all I had to do was carry a bucket across the stage. It was a five seconds performance only."

"But it gave me confidence. I found I began to get a grip on things. I was growing up."

A foothold in the professional theatre was still a million miles away. But at least he had a goal now—something to strive for.

The dream of success was something that his parents, a couple of incurable Irish romantics, had bequeathed to him.

The family of Pat's father had lived around Mullhemore in County Leitrim for something like 400 years. The elder McGooohan married the beautiful red-headed Rose Fitzpatrick from the next village.

Ireland was poor and famine-ridden. Boatload after boatload of young people were leaving for where the money was supposed to be. America was laying the basis of her immigrant population. The McGooohans sailed to try their luck in New York.

It was a time the family likes to forget. By the time Pat was born on March 19, 1928, the dreams of a fortune in the New World had faded and homesickness and disillusion had taken their place. The McGooohans returned, thankfully, to the family farm in Ireland.

It was here that Pat formed his earliest memories. The Irishman who has spent most of his life away from Ireland still recalls the sights, sounds and smells of childhood — the stone-floored kitchen, sides of bacon hanging from rafters, the peat fires. ("Above all," he says, "the peat fires."). Going through his head still are the sweet brogues of the storytellers who came to weave their wonders in the Irish evenings.

## STRANGER ON THE SHORE

IT was an idyll that couldn't last. Again came the need to find the work Ireland just couldn't give. This time, Pat's father tried Britain.

Like a newly-born calf, blinking uncertainly in the sunlight, a tall, skinny lad, moody and cruelly asthmatic in the dour climate of an alien land, wandered from the gang plank of the Holyhead boat.

McGooohan is silent about most things—and above all about those days. But he does recall that he seems to have brought to Britain a very strong religious phase.

With a laugh, he remembers fiery sermons preached to four sisters, Patricia, Kathleen, Marie and Annette.

The wish to become a priest was to remain like an ache for the rest of his time at school.

When it passed, it left him with a sense of hopelessness, of futility. What would happen to him now?

## NEXT WEEK:

Rupert Butler takes a look at the "Danger Man" series itself in the second of his three special articles.