

# The Chief Scout

## Peter Duncan



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Peter Duncan was born in 1954 in London. His parents were variety performers who produced and appeared in Pantomime and summer shows. His early life was spent moving around the country with his family, attending many different schools and developing a lifelong love of the theatre. At 15, he decided to leave school, set on becoming a professional actor; his career began with a two-year stint at the National Theatre, where he appeared in 11 productions, learning and discovering his craft.

Success came quickly for Peter, working regularly in theatre and on TV. In the early 1970s, he became a familiar face on the small screen, taking the lead in many one-off dramas and TV series such as *The Childhood Friend*, *Sons and Lovers*, *Renoir My Father*, *Warship*, *Fathers and Families*, *Sam*, *Fallen Hero*, *King Cinder*, *Oranges and Lemons*, and *Space 1999*. Peter also appeared in films during this period: *Quilp*, *Stardust*, *The Lifetaker* and a notable cameo in the classic *Flash Gordon*. In 1978, he was offered the chance to become a *Blue Peter* presenter, which he turned down in favour of his acting career. Accepting the second offer, which came in 1980, Peter quickly became the team's action man, very much following the John Noakes' model. Among Peter's most famous exploits were running the first London Marathon in just over three hours, cleaning the face of Big Ben and wearing his trademark green and white check suit.

In 1984, Peter filmed his BBC Children's series, *Duncan Dares*, which enabled him to embark on further exploits. His daring-do's included a high wire tightrope act, racing a truck in the French Grand Prix and sailing a Volkswagen across the

Irish Sea. He returned to *Blue Peter* the following year, finally leaving in 1986 to concentrate on acting, musical theatre and on his own production company. He has played the lead roles in the musicals *Barnum*, *Me and My Girl*, *The Little Tramp* and *The Card* for which he received an Olivier nomination for 'best actor in a musical'. He has produced stage versions of *Erik the Viking* and *The Gingerbread Man* and played all the classic Panto roles including Buttons, Peter Pan and Captain Hook in his own productions. He has also appeared in many plays around the country.

In 1999, Peter, his wife, Annie, and their four children took an expedition around the world; the *Travel Bug* documentary was shown on CBBC. This led to more travel documentaries, including a backpacking trip to China called *Chinese Breakaway*; and he recently took his son Arthur to Jordan to live with the Bedouin in the desert.

Peter is one of the best-known faces on TV, with a particular following among the under 35s who remember his *Blue Peter* days. An organiser and provider of youth drama workshops, he is also renowned for his commitment to developing the potential of young people through outdoor activity and travel.

Peter was a Cub Scout. He visited Windsor as a boy to accompany his cousin, a Queen's Scout, to meet the Chief Scout, never dreaming one day he would fulfil that role himself. He is a natural Scout, and sees the Movement as a great inspiration for young people.