



“Have you met him?”  
 “Who”  
 “The Doctor”  
 “Doctor Who?”  
 “No, Doc Martin!”



Every other year, since 2004, some time during April, Port Isaac sees a big increase to its population. The cast and crew of the TV series *Doc Martin* arrive in town.

Doc Martin is a grumpy old GP, played by Martin Clunes, who stars in the TV series that shares his name. And every two years, for about three months, Port Isaac takes on its alter ego, *Port Wenn*.

“Why Port Isaac?”, you might ask. It’s the charm of Port Isaac! Port Isaac has been a popular setting for many films and television series over the years. Back in 1953 locals Eddie Philp, Frank Masters, Harold Brown, Will Steer, Westlake Brown, Harry May, Sam Honey, John Glover and George Williams were extras in a locally filmed big screen film *Knights of the Round Table*. Stars of the film were Robert Taylor and Ava Gardner and the story goes that Ava invited George Williams back to Hollywood with her ... he declined as he had his garden to tend!

“Back in 1935, when my brother, Denis (Collings), was about four or five, he was in a film made in Port Isaac - *The Phantom Light*. It was a British Crime Film starring Binnie Hale and Gordon Harker. I remember my brother told me he was paid half a crown (12½p).”

Shirley Gladwin (nee Collings)



Fast forward to 1999 and another film company was in the village. Little did anyone know that this British comedy, *Saving Grace* would have such an impact on our little Cornish fishing village.

Film reviewer Roger Ebert wrote, “Port Isaac, the village in Cornwall that provides the setting for *Saving Grace*, seems like the kind of place you might never want to leave, so friendly are the citizens and charming the aspect.” How true those words ring over a decade later. Written by Mark Crowdy from Trebetherick, the film starred Brenda Blethyn. Acting alongside her was Martin Clunes in the role of Doctor Martin Bamford ... and it was from this character that Doc Martin evolved.

And so, in 2004, the first series of *Doc Martin* was aired bringing Port Isaac’s charm to a worldwide audience under the fictional village name of *Port Wenn*.

*Doc Martin* is a comedy drama about a doctor, played by Martin Clunes whose career comes to a standstill when he develops a blood phobia, which forces him to leave his successful surgical career. To the surprise of his colleagues, he applies to become a General Practitioner in the picturesque Cornish town of Port Wenn, where he spent some of his childhood holidays. However, Dr Martin Ellingham’s truculent bedside manner doesn’t endear him to the local villagers.

Over the years Port Isaac has seen his unconventional love affair with local schoolteacher, Louisa, played by Caroline Catz, develop into marriage. They have a baby, John Henry. Several receptionists have worked for the Doc and at the time of writing, the efficient Morwenna Newcross, played by Jessica Ranson, has the job. She is in a relationship with village heartthrob Al Large. Al, played by Joe Absolom, is the son of Bert Large, a jack-of-all-trades and a single father. Bert is played by Ian McNeice. Mrs Tishell, played by Selina Cadell, who owns the local Chemist shop carries a torch for the Doc - however, he does not share her dream! The Doc’s Aunt Ruth, played by Dame Eileen Atkins, a formidable London Psychiatrist arrives in Series 5. And to keep everyone in order, PC Penhale, played by John Marquez, is not known to be the sharpest tool in the box!



Anybody else? There’s Buddy the dog. Despite the Doc’s complete contempt, Buddy follows him around constantly and ends up being the Ellingham family pet. Buddy is played by Dodger, a Jack Russell Cross who has also starred in *Sherlock Holmes II*, *Pirates of the Caribbean IV* and *Young Victoria*.

Port Wen was originally found in the Arundel Charter of 1250 as the name of Port Quin!

“Since 2004, every other year, from Easter to the school summer holidays, the filming of the *Doc Martin* TV series takes place in and around Port Isaac. Over the years the cast and crew from the series have got to know, and become friends with, the local community ...” Ian McNeice, aka Bert Large

Ian McNeice recalls, “For every other year since 2004, I’ve been coming to Port Isaac to film *Doc Martin*. Over the years, my partner Cindy Franke and I, have become part of the community. I’ve lost track of how many dog shows I’ve opened, as well as opening the Delabole Carnival one year. I was also asked to open the refurbished local Co-op and I introduced the *Fisherman’s Friends* on a Friday night in the summer. It has been a delight to get to know the locals, and although we will be forever known as “Emmets” ourselves, we are now lucky enough to call a lot of them our friends. During this period, we have always managed to rent the same house that has enough bedrooms to accommodate all of my children. Over the many visits, they have learned to surf and water-ski, and have also been kayaking and coastering. We have all been particularly fond of going to the many amazing local restaurants and pubs! The house has also been a “hotel” for various family and friends, who now tell us when they’d like to “check in”! We have endless memories of this magical village that will remain in our hearts forever!”

“In Series 9, Mrs Tishell was handing the Doc a birthday cake in the Crab & Lobster Pub with a crowd of extras watching on. She had a long speech which we filmed, and when the Director called CUT, suddenly Mrs Tishell screeched out, “WHERE’S MY NECK BRACE!!!!”? She had just filmed the entire sequence without her neck brace, and nobody; not even the Wardrobe Department, the Director, the other actors, or the crew had noticed she wasn’t wearing it!!!!”



taken from THE REAL VOICES OF PORT ISAAC