



Robert gets up close with the actress Monica Evans in a play in the 60s and (above) with Christopher Timothy and Lynda Bellingham in *All Creatures Great And Small*

ed from 1961-86. He says he's not close to Paul ('he lives a very different life, a long way away in Devonshire') but does see his daughters. 'They worry about me, although why they do, I don't know. They should have given me up by now.' Robert admits to not being the perfect family man and having had a few ladies in his life. 'I'd never give a number though – that's ridiculous. And the number that I'd come up with, if I were to be truthful, would be disappointing!'

**R**obert, who describes himself as an 'old rogue', adds, 'I was utterly unfit for marriage. But I regret that my marriages didn't work out – although my second did last for 25 years, which nowadays is considered a pretty good stint.'

He started his career in style, working with legends such as Laurence Olivier, John Gielgud, Richard Burton and Ralph Richardson. 'I was always in awe of Olivier – although slightly less so after working with him and getting to understand his method,' he says. 'And he was tough – he told us all what to do!' But the one he was closest to was Burton, and he confesses to still missing him more than 30 years after his death from a brain haemorrhage aged 58. By then Burton had been diagnosed with cirrhosis of the liver and kidney disease after years of heavy drinking. 'We loved each other dearly, shared a mutual passion for Shakespeare and enjoyed many a good night out together,' laughs Robert. 'The two of us were good at holding our liquor in our youth – but I'm afraid that his ability to do so lessened as the years went by, because he'd have a bottle of this followed by a bottle of that, every day. I'm afraid he was really responsible for his own death.'

Robert first met Elizabeth Taylor in 1962, two years before her first marriage to Burton. 'Richard and Elizabeth came to my home in Chelsea, even though I warned them that there was nothing but sausages and vodka in the house. "I like them both!" she laughed. Those of us who knew his first wife, Sybil, whom I adored, felt great disquiet about this new develop-

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# Why you have to fall in love with your co-stars

*Still an old rogue at 90, Robert Hardy tells York Membery of his hellraising days with Burton and Taylor, and why he was utterly unfit for marriage*

fixed on me, so I asked him one day, "Why on earth are you gazing at me all the time? It's an odd feeling!" And Peter replied, "Well, we're brothers, aren't we, and I want to catch a family feeling and see if there's something I can pick up." That impressed me.' In 1981 Davison rang Robert asking for his advice after he'd been offered the leading role in *Doctor Who*. "Don't touch it with a bargepole," I replied. "You'll never escape the Doc-

tor's long shadow if you play him – none of the previous Doctors have." He chuckles, before adding, 'Happily for Peter, he ignored my advice and went on to become a huge star!'

Robert has been married and

divorced twice. He and his first wife, Elizabeth, were together from 1952-56 and had a son, Paul. And he has two daughters, Emma, a photographer, and Justine, a novelist, from his marriage to Sally Pearson, which last-

## 'Liz Taylor kissed me on the mouth – what an experience'



her afterwards and she was so pleased', he says. 'Thrilled to bits!'

He's been fond of his male co-stars too, particularly Davison, who played Siegfried's younger brother Tristan on *All Creatures Great And Small* – thought Robert says he initially found Davison's habit of watching his every move disconcerting. 'His eyes were

something else, with *Alice Among The Fairies* and *Alice's Golden Hour* considered as titles by author Lewis Carroll