

Daily **ECHO**

# magazine

## Snowball melts

Bad Girl Nicole Faraday  
visits a children's  
charity in Peru

# Bad girl makes good

A Swanage actress famous for her less-than-wholesome TV role, has been captivated by a children's charity in Peru

**A**S Bad Girl Snowball Merriman, she is no stranger to battling adversity. After all, in just two tumultuous TV series we have seen her dabble in porn movies, murder a photographer, grass on her fellow inmates, plant a bomb in the prison, have her hair set on fire and fling herself off a balcony in a dramatic suicide mission.

But that was just make-believe for Swanage actress Nicole Faraday, who played Snowball in the hit ITV drama *Bad Girls*. Whereas spending a week with a struggling community in Peru meant she came face to face with real-life deprivation.

The 26-year-old former pupil at Talbot Heath School in Bournemouth, who has also starred in *Casualty*, readily admits she had no idea what to expect when she swapped the confines of Larkhall Prison for a week in South America.

"My first thought was, 'Excellent, a free holiday to Peru'," she said. "It was only when I was out there and learnt more about the charity and what they do there that I was just blown away by it all."

She and actor James Gaddas - who plays corrupt prison governor Neil Grayling - visited El Sauce in the mountains of North Peru with international children's charity Plan. There they found children being



■ **Bad:** Nicole in the ITV drama

were cracks in the walls and ceilings from earthquakes and the teachers told me how scared they were that the building would collapse with the children inside. And there are no



■ Not bad: Nicole as herself

£10,000 fund-raising scheme to build and equip a new school for the children of El Sauce – a target that was quickly reached with the aid of a Bad Girls auction.

And it was also an opportunity for former Coronation Street star James to catch up with the three-year-old Peruvian child that he sponsors.

After seeing the pair's emotional meeting, Nicole also decided to sponsor a village child, Maria Heliga, whose name translates as Mary Angel.

"The basic sponsorship package is £12 a month and at first I was concerned over whether I could afford it because acting is so up and down and I haven't worked since Bad Girls," Nicole said.

"But then I realised that £12 isn't even the cost of a night out. And the great thing about Plan is that you know exactly where your money is going.

"You can sponsor someone in any

Statistics reveal that 54 per cent of Peruvian homes are officially classed as poor and 22 per cent are considered extremely poor.

But Nicole and James were welcomed with open arms by the villagers and were impressed by the strong community bonds and their determination to make the best of things.

Nicole said: "They hardly have anything, but what little they do have they were more than happy to share with us.

"They had made Union Jack flags to wave at us as we arrived, and they got out their best chairs, sat us down and sang and performed for us.

"And I was made an honorary godmother of a little girl and had to cut her hair at a ceremony. It was an incredible experience."

MELANIE VASS

■ Plan offers to help all their sponsors – and there are more than a



■ Hi-tec: Nicole gives the children a lesson in new tech



■ Flying the flag: Some of the children had made Un

