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KUDOS

Grantchester Series 8

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**All content is strictly embargoed until
00.01 15th December 2023**



Grantchester series 8 returns to ITV1 and IT VX

Grantchester returns for its eighth series on ITV1 and IT VX.

The hugely popular show produced by Kudos (a Banijay UK company) stars Robson Green returning as DI Geordie Keating and Tom Brittney as Reverend Will Davenport.

Will is the happiest he's ever been but his world will be rocked by a terrible accident. He's always preached the word of a compassionate God – but how can he now, when his despair leads him on a dangerous downward spiral? Geordie has found a new contentment in his relationship with Cathy, but when they are both confronted with shocking announcements at work their happiness is threatened. As Mrs C, Leonard, Jack and Daniel rally around, both Will and Geordie find themselves in unfamiliar, emotional waters and murder is always around the corner.

The eighth season of *Grantchester* will range from Speedway to spies, exploring the lives of invisible women and the very visible problems caused by Leonard's new vocation which may, once again, find him battling the law.

Exploring faith, forgiveness, and redemption – this explosive series tests Will and Geordie to the limit.

Charlotte Ritchie (*Ghosts*) returns as Bonnie, alongside Tessa Peake-Jones as Mrs C, Al Weaver as Leonard Finch, Kacey Ainsworth as Cathy Keating, Oliver Dimsdale as Daniel Marlowe and Nick Brimble as Jack Chapman. Special guest actors for this series include Shaun Dingwall (*Top Boy*, *Noughts & Crosses*), Jeff Rawle (*Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, *Doc Martin*) and Jemima Rooper (*Gold Digger*, *The Girlfriend Experience*).

The series is executive produced for Kudos (part of Banijay UK) by Emma Kingsman-Lloyd (*SAS Rogue Heroes*, *Deadwater Fell*), writer and series creator Daisy Coulam (*Deadwater Fell*, *Humans*), Robson Green and Tom Brittney. The Executive Producers for MASTERPIECE are Rebecca Eaton and Susanne Simpson at GBH Boston.

Adapted from the Grantchester Mysteries novels by James Runcie, the series was developed for television by Daisy Coulam. Writers this series include Richard Cookson (episode one), Helen Black (episode three), Anita Vettesse (episode four) and Richard Cookson and Karla Williams (episode five). The series is directed by Rob Evans, Al Weaver (who makes his directing debut) and Martin Smith.

Grantchester is commissioned by PBS MASTERPIECE and PBSd for US audiences and is one of ITV's most popular returning series. MASTERPIECE is presented on PBS by GBH Boston. Banijay Rights will be responsible for international distribution.

Tom Brittney is Will Davenport



Tom Brittney plays Will Davenport

Series eight opens with a time jump forward, with Bonnie and Will about to have a baby. Tell us where we find Will at the start of the series.

Will is a happily married man; he and Bonnie couldn't be happier. They're best friends. But Will is struggling a little bit with disciplining [his stepson] Ernie and being a tougher parent, because obviously his father was the worst kind of parent and he wants to be the opposite. So Bonnie gets frustrated a little bit, saying, 'You need to be a father. You need to properly tell him what to do. Otherwise, he'll be trouble.' So there are teething issues with that, but, all in all, Will is loving life, until something happens that takes Bonnie away and then leads to it all coming crashing down.

So Will is beset by this great tragedy in which somebody loses their life. How does it affect Will?

From the moment we first met Will, he's always been struggling with his demons. What drives him in life is being the best man he can – everything he does, every case he helps Geordie with, every problem that he solves, he feels like he's getting better and better as a person, morally. And then this thing happens that just seems to erase all of that in one instant. Everything he's worked so hard for is gone just like that. It just destroys the way Will thinks of himself, because this action, whether it was an accident or on purpose, in the eyes of God and everyone else, he believes it's unforgivable, and it really sets him down a dark path.

It leads Will to have a crisis of faith. What can you say about that?

Now that this thing has happened, he's questioning whether God or anyone can ever love him again. He just shuts them out and it pushes him further and further away from everyone to the point where we don't know if he's ever coming back.

How does Geordie try to help?

A couple of series ago, Will was helping Geordie when he was going through his darkness. Will was there for him and really tried to pull him back to the light. And so Geordie does the same for Will. He's his best friend and his father figure. Geordie understands the guilt that Will feels, because he's gone through it himself. It doesn't mean that Will listens. The tragedy of this series is that everybody thinks they're losing the Will that they love and Geordie has to watch it happen while also trying to deal with his own issues with his job and possible retirement. Geordie doesn't realise how far down the path Will goes.

You and Robson seem to have forged a close friendship offscreen as well as on. What can you tell us about that?

We are best friends. Genuinely, we have a little bit of an age difference, but it doesn't exist when we're together: we're both children and best mates on set just messing about. We laugh all the time. But also, outside of work, we always try to see each other. I go up to his house in Northumberland sometimes just for a sleepover, to hang out with him and his partner. We'll watch Jackass on TV and eat sweets. I love it and I hope we'll always make that effort.

What can you tell me about the cases this series?

They're a lot more personal this series than before. They're not just strangers within the Grantchester community who are getting murdered; they all have a link in some way, which then compounds what happens to Will even further, because it's seeming like he just has the mark of death upon him. He feels he is a corrupt individual now who is only going to cause death and misery. Whether he actually has any responsibility at all for what's going on, he's making it his problem. It's different from previous series, because normally there's a distance between Will and the murders; he can detach from them emotionally a bit more, but that becomes impossible for him to do.

You're working with real babies this season as well as Dickens the dog. How was that?

I both love it, and it has also made me put a pause on thinking about being a parent for a little bit. There are a couple of babies that I'm holding this series and it made me so broody. They're lovely. But, also, when it's not your baby and you have to do 30 takes with this baby that quickly gets very bored and starts to scream, it's not so much fun. Will's dog, Dickens, was very well behaved this series, although in every scene with Dickens I probably have a whole handful of sausages in order to bribe him. He's got a very good agent, while I get greasy hands and have to change my costume.

How do you think Will has changed over the five series you've been in?

What's sad is that this series, when we meet him at the beginning, he's really the best man that he's ever been and he's worked so hard to get there. The thing you love so much about Bonnie is that she knows him so well and keeps him grounded. I think he's matured a lot and is starting to shed the demons that were pulling him back. He will always have the issues with his father and his upbringing, but he can talk to Bonnie, who helps puts things in perspective for him. So I think he's matured.

The motorcycle has been a big feature of Will's life. Can you tell us about that, and what it's like for you riding the motorbike?

The motorbike has always been a symbol of Will's rebellion and something he's holding onto from his youth. But he's a family man now and when Ernie sees Will come off the bike in episode one, it makes Will start reassessing his priorities. Then he has a bit of an immature wobble: he doesn't take some news very well, goes back to old habits slightly, which then has a knock-on effect for the entire series.

I love riding the motorbike so much. I was so scared when they made me get my licence, but the minute I got it I understood why people love motorbikes. The producers won't let me go very fast, but my stuntman makes me look very cool on that bike. I briefly considered buying a motorbike when I got my licence, but I wouldn't want to put my parents through the worry.

How does the cast get on behind the scenes? Is there a lot of joking around?

Usually, it's me and Robson. For example, I have these jelly beans that are very spicy, but they look like just strawberry flavoured jelly beans. Robson isn't very good with spice, so just before we did a scene I said, 'Do you want a strawberry jelly bean?' It was a ghost pepper jelly bean. So he was doing the scene and his eyes were absolutely streaming. He was crying! It was so funny.

You directed your first episode last year. Will you direct another?

This year Al Weaver [who plays Leonard] directed an episode. And yes, of course I took the mickey out of him, because he did the same to me when I directed! But when you direct you can't be on camera as much, and Will's storyline is quite intense this series, so they needed me onscreen. But I loved directing. It gave me such a thrill working with all these actors that I admire, and they were so professional and made it so easy for me to do.

What do fans say to you about the show?

I get told off quite a bit! They say, 'Will had better look after Bonnie.' I say, 'I'm not actually Will, but I promise I'll pass that on.' And people say, 'I wish you wouldn't smoke so much,' but it's the 60s and everyone did smoke quite a bit back then. But people really care and I'm excited to see what they make of this series. I love seeing people on Twitter really getting invested in the storylines.

What do fans get from watching Grantchester?

It's more than just a murder mystery, which sets it apart from other long-running shows. It's about these characters that you care so much about. Fans love to see our characters involved in this dark crime and they love the scenery, the fact it's filmed in this idyllic part of the countryside. It looks so beautiful on screen. The thing I'm most proud of being part of this show is that the Grantchester writers make us really care about the characters.

Robson Green is Geordie Keating



Robson Green plays DI Geordie Keating

You've been in Grantchester since the beginning, longer than you've ever been in any other series. What keeps you coming back?

As I'm in the last third of my life, I want to work with people I love working with and do projects that make me genuinely happy and push me creatively. But in the end, I just really want to have fun doing what I love. And Grantchester caters for those needs. I'm an executive producer, and at the beginning we knew we had something special and that would float the audience's boat, but we never realised how popular it would turn out to be and how well it would be received around the world. But as long as Daisy [Coulam] is at the helm, with [executive producer] Emma Kingsman-Lloyd and as long as we have cinematographers and lighting designers at the top of their game, and we're all still enjoying it, long may it continue.

What sort of reaction do you get from fans?

I just came back from doing a fishing show in Australia. In the outback I was with what I'd call really stereotypical Australian blokes who run a cod hatchery, who told me Grantchester was their favourite show! It was just the most bizarre and surreal accolade. I had the same reaction in Alaska, when I was filming on a glacier and a bunch of Americans started going, 'It's Geordie! It's Geordie!' Wow. I feel honoured and privileged to be part of something that is enjoyed around the world and proud to be part of such a talented team.

What's happening for Geordie in season eight?

There's a murder every episode and the stories are really gripping. We start with a case where a biker is found dead in a field after a charity motorbike race. Geordie and Will both realise this is a murder and not an accident. Then Will gets involved in a tragedy where somebody loses their life and Geordie desperately wants to exonerate Will. We have an episode directed by the wonderful Al Weaver, who plays Leonard, which was great. Later, Geordie gets into a tussle with Leonard over his halfway house. Leonard sees the good in everyone, but Geordie is old school and realises that not everyone can be rehabilitated. Geordie's big story arc is that his boss, DCI Elliot Wallace [Michael D. Xavier], is trying to edge him out, and Geordie is distraught. Amongst all this, Will has a big personal crisis and Geordie goes to great lengths to help him. The last episode is beautiful and has a wonderful surprise. Also, my friend, Mark Benton, is a guest star.

How does Geordie feel about being encouraged to retire from the force?

It's a defining moment for Geordie when he realises his shelf life has expired. He's closed for business, he needs to move on and leave this place that he loves, and has given his life to, because he can't compete with Elliot and his entourage. Elliot's got people in his pocket who are far more powerful than Geordie. It's a very painful moment for Geordie and great to play as an actor. We'll have to see if he can find a way around it.

What can you tell us about Georgie and Cathy's story arc this season?

Geordie doesn't want to tell her he's being forced to retire, because that's embarrassing, apart from the worry of how they're going to deal with it financially. But when he discovers she's going to get promoted in her job, that makes it worse because it will affect his position in life – in the early 60s, men were the breadwinners. And suddenly, how was that going to go down with the people in the village and and at the police station when they realise that he's no longer the breadwinner and head of the household? So that's where we find those two, but we know they'll work it out because there is genuine affection and love for one another.

You're an executive producer and one of the lead actors. How does it feel to be the elder statesman on set?

I do feel a responsibility. I want anybody who comes on the show to feel at home. Like when we got Mark Benton, I said to him, 'You're going to love this, Mark,' and he went, 'You don't need to tell me that. I've spoken to so many people who've worked on the show who've said it's lovely.' When people come on the show, I want to make sure that they have fun and enjoy the process. Of course they'll work hard and know their lines and their story arc, but I also want them to have some fun. The industry can be incredibly stressful, but in the end, we're making television and that's a privileged position to be in; therefore, we should enjoy ourselves.

Tell us about casting Mark Benton in a guest role as a village copper. I'm assuming that you suggested him for the role?

I'm not sure I should be telling you this, but the part was for a woman, originally. But when we couldn't get the actresses we wanted, I said, 'Okay, let's just imagine that the cop's male. Do you know someone who could play a cop coming up to retirement and who was likeable and funny and could draw pathos to a situation?' And I suggested Mark and they went for him.

He is the nicest, funniest guy you're ever likely to come across and he's an absolute joy to work with and brilliant at his craft. I've loved him for years and years.

Geordie and Will are close buddies and you've had Tom Brittney on your travel series, Weekend Escapes. Can you tell us about your relationship with him offscreen?

We love each other. We stay in contact all the time. When I was in Australia filming my fishing show, he texts me, 'How's it going?' and sends me a picture of himself next to Cameron Diaz – he's working with her on a film [called Back in Action] – and all I can send him is a picture of me with a big tuna. Like James Norton, Tom is such a lovely person to be alongside – so funny, but with an intelligent wit. It's lovely to work with him. And I've never known anyone who can learn so much dialogue in one go!

Al Weaver is Leonard Finch



Al Weaver plays Leonard Finch

Where do we find Leonard as the series opens?

He's given up the café and because his instinct is to help people he's got a halfway house and is taking in homeless people and ex-convicts. He still wants to do his duty and be of service to others, but without that tag of religion. He's trying his best, but it's chaos! Daniel's helping, but they need help. Leonard is way out of his depth, as normal. So they get in a housekeeper, Martha [Simone Lahbib]. Leonard also faces discrimination from some of their new neighbours who don't like alcoholics and ex-cons moving in. But he's a strong character and deals with it. This time, he really feels like he's found his feet and is fulfilling his potential. He's found his place in the world.

Yet there seems to be a lot of tension still between Leonard and his boyfriend, Daniel [Oliver Dimsdale]. What can you say about that?

Leonard's dropped him into his halfway house, which was never the plan for Daniel. Daniel's got his own things going on, the art world he's involved with, and Leonard can be quite tunnel visioned when it comes to his own dreams. As much as he is empathetic towards people in need, sometimes the people closest to him can suffer, because he takes them for granted a little bit. He ends up making selfish decisions without really thinking about Daniel. It's a good story for Leonard, trying to find his balance in the halfway house

How are Leonard's relationships with Will [Tom Brittney] and Mrs Chapman [Tessa Peake Jones] this series?

Leonard gets Will around to try to improve the image of the halfway house when the neighbours complain. But Will steps in and goes too far and they have a big falling out. But, really, they're brothers. Mrs C feels she should be helping out at the halfway house and tries to interfere in Leonard's endeavours, but he doesn't want her taking over like she nearly did with the cafe. When they hire the housekeeper, Martha, there's a war between her and Mrs C over who's the best mother figure, who bakes best, who can be of more service to Leonard, to win his affections. But of course their relationship survives it.

What sort of reaction have you had to Leonard, particularly his struggle to live an authentic life at a time when homosexuality was illegal?

I feel very privileged and honoured. It's changed my life playing him, just made me a better person, to think that this guy who faces such adversity still wants to devote his life to helping others. He's always got good intentions. Hopefully when people watch him, if they're in a difficult situation, they can get some strength or inspiration from Leonard's story. That's what great television does. Leonard's got this great levity and great gravity as well and always seems to find a way to overcome the obstacles put in front of him. I admire him enormously. Also, Leonard is so fun to play and I never get bored of him.

You directed episode three of this series, which was your first experience of directing. How did you find it?

It was a dream come true. I was going to ask last year, but I didn't feel it was quite ready, and then watching Tom do it was really inspiring, because he's very gung-ho and also a bit cavalier, like, 'Well, what's the worst that could happen?!' Directing was one of the best, most fulfilling experiences I've had. I felt kind of spoiled, because I had my friends supporting me and I wanted to make it make it fun for them. When Tom directed us last year, every time he asked me to do something I would say, 'Denied!' as a joke. And as soon as I gave him a direction during my episode, he shouted, 'Denied!' I created a monster! But no, they were all really lovely and supportive.

You had the added pressure of directing one of Grantchester's rare nude scenes...

Yes! I didn't think for a second that would be the episode they would give me, but I felt really privileged. My episode is about the theme of women trying to find their voices, so it's meant to be a celebration of the power of women and what they had to do back then to be heard.

Will, Geordie and Cathy attend a presentation at the university about an important artwork, and during it a bunch of half-naked female students stage a protest, and then someone dies and the incidents are linked. It's very tricky to film nudity – it wasn't actual nudity, so I had to find ways to give the illusion of nudity, which brings out the comedy. We had an intimacy coordinator to work it all out and make sure it was all done as sensitively as possible, and the actresses doing it were such good sports.

You've been in Grantchester since the beginning. How does that feel, given the warm reception it's received all over the world?

We always imagine each series might be the last one, and then we always come back. I mean, I was in my early thirties when we started Grantchester, and I'm now 42! It's weird, because we felt when James [Norton] left, that was it. And then Tom came in and he's fantastic.

And then we get someone like Charlotte Ritchie coming in and she's as high end as you can get as an actress. The guests we get in are cracking – in the episode I directed there are Jeff Rawle and Jemima Rooper, just top quality. It makes me think we're doing alright.

Kacey Ainsworth is Cathy Keating



Kacey Ainsworth plays Cathy Keating

Where do we find Cathy as season eight starts?

In the domestic realm, Cathy and Geordie are on a more equal footing, which is good, because they've had quite a lot of ups and downs. Cathy is quite assertive at wanting her own independence but not at the expense of anyone else, which is a very motherly way to think about it.

You want to work, but you don't want it to impact anyone, which is completely impossible. However, she gets a job opportunity that she feels she can't turn down, but the problem is that she doesn't want to upset anyone. She's also welcoming Will into the family and being a bit of a mother hen – she feels she has a responsibility to support, to advise and sometimes to interfere! Because Bonnie has to go away, Cathy feels she has to support Will and she drags him to a few places he probably doesn't want to go to. The lovely thing about Cathy is that she has a brilliant naivete and everything comes from a place of massive optimism.

And yet, when Cathy gets a promotion at work, Geordie seems less than happy for her.

Right at the very beginning, Cathy is feeling like he's not very supportive. But if he'd have said, 'It's amazing, it's wonderful,' that wouldn't be true to the character. He won't stay in that entrenched position – Geordie's view will evolve and things will change. It feels like they've come to a level where their children are getting older and they can fulfil some of the things that they want to do themselves.

But he's looking at the end of his career; she's looking at possibly the real beginning of hers, and I think lots of people can relate to that, the idea of returning to work once your kids are older, and possibly the idea of your partner coming to the end of their working life.

How do you get back into character to film each new series?

I have an accent tape because Cathy is from Cambridgeshire, so I do listen to that before I film and I stay in the accent on set while I'm filming. And Cathy wears restrictive underwear – not an actual girdle, but an all-in-one, which I like wearing because it makes me sit up straight and gives me a slightly different shape that makes me feel like Cathy. It's not that comfortable, but it's no worse than wearing a corset in a period drama.

You feature heavily in episode three, directed by Al Weaver. What was it like being directed by Al?

I always knew Al would be a brilliant director – there's just something about him. He's brilliant actor and those things can go hand in hand. He knew what he wanted and he got it. I knew we'd have a good time. Although it was funny: there was Al suddenly going, 'Come on, come on, you need to hold it together' to the boys. Often we women sit there saying, 'These boys need to just shut up and get on with it,' so it's very funny when the shoe is on the other foot, when Al is the one having to say, 'Hold it together!'

Cathy, Geordie and Will are confronted by a nude protest in that episode. What was that like to film?

I'm 53 and I've been working since I was eight years old and finally this is the first job I've been on when people cared about what was happening and didn't just expect the women to turn up and strip off. There was care and attention paid to that and to everyone else on set.

The women were very well looked after, with people shielding them as they got dressed and undressed, and the other actors were looked after, too. I've been in situations where you've had to get down to your underwear or get naked and there's been no conversation about how that feels. So it was lovely.

Would you say Cathy is representative of a typical Fifties woman?

We've seen so many stereotypes of 1950s housewife and I like that we've never done that with Cathy. We've never portrayed this character as a cliché. She isn't always baking cakes in a dirndl skirt and doing all of the stuff that we genuinely have been brainwashed to think that this is what Fifties women did.

I've talked with [producers] Emma and Daisy and Tessa [Peake-Jones] about our grandmothers and what their lives were like, and none of them were Doris Day. Both of my grandmothers worked. So it's great that Cathy is somebody who doesn't fit that housewife stereotype – she has a job as well as opinions, hopes, dreams and fears that she shares with her husband. Yes, we still have the undertones of him being the main breadwinner and his difficulty with change, but we make the characters deeper and more interesting than two-dimensional stereotypes.

Most of your scenes are with Robson Green. What's your relationship like with him?

It's really lovely and very easy. We're very respectful of each other. But when I come back after a few weeks away with my own London accent, Robson and I do spend the first 15 minutes looking at each other, going, 'I'm sorry, what?' Because we're not attuned into each other's accents. Robson is very funny, too: whenever he wants to make me laugh, he does a comedy character called 'Old Robson,' which is a parody of one of his grandparents who clearly had no teeth. It cracks me up.

What do you think is Grantchester's appeal that makes it so popular?

You've got a brilliant whodunit with a murder, but interwoven between all of that, you have these characters who've grown over the period of time, and you want to see what's happened to them. And their stories are linked with the political and social environment of the time. So you have the fulfilment of two things at once as well as nostalgia.

Tessa Peake Jones is Mrs Chapman



Tessa Peake Jones plays Mrs Chapman

What sort of reaction do you get to Mrs C from Grantchester fans?

Early on, people weren't quite used to her and she was quite a dragon and grumpy in the first few series. And one woman on a bus in Oxford actually asked me, 'How do they make you look so ugly on the screen?' I took it as a backhanded compliment! I said, 'I don't wear any makeup and I'm wearing a wig and she's older than I am in real life.' Generally, people say they love Grantchester: they love Tom and Robson and Mrs C bossing people about. What's lovely is they don't just see it as a murder mystery; it's also about the family and relationship dynamics of all the people, which inevitably, over eight years has grown with us as actors.

What keeps you coming back to Grantchester?

The writing. They always find a new journey for Mrs C. Her cancer storyline last year was really stretching and I loved that. I just love playing her because she is very different from other characters I've ever played. I tend to get cast as slightly softer, gentler people, more sweet-natured, not grumpy and tough and bossy. So it's a challenge. Mrs C is very unlike me, too – I'm the sunniest, smiliest, warmest person you could meet, so she is a real stretch to play, but that's why it's such fun.

She's very much the conservative voice of the series, and has been outwardly discriminatory about homosexuality, for example. What's it been like for you to play such a conservative character?

Early on, her religion seemed to dominate everything she thought about in life. That's slightly changed over the years. She's one of those people that looks like she won't budge at all, but actually then has a little think and does, very slowly. It was particularly evident with Leonard, whom she found very threatening to begin with and was against his sexual tendencies. Yet now she actively helps Leonard and Daniel in their relationship and running the halfway house. So that is a huge step forward for her and [her husband] Jack's helped to soften her up a bit. I don't think she's ever going to welcome the Swinging Sixties, but I think deep down there is a very good heart there. I think she's just quite dogmatic because I don't think she had a very happy childhood herself.

What can you tell us about Mrs C's story arc this season?

After spending last season thinking she might die of cancer, this series starts with her feeling life is about living. So you see her getting her hair done, wearing lippy, going out more socially: all these are quite unusual things for her, but she's enjoying life. But both of her 'boys,' Leonard and Will, give her things to worry about, so it's not long before she's clucking around them trying to help out. Things get particularly bad with Will when he goes off the rails a bit and she's very worried, because she does see those two as her sons.

Another woman, Martha (Simone Lahbib), is hired to be Leonard's housekeeper at the halfway house. How much does that ruffle Mrs C's feathers?

It doesn't go terribly well, because Mrs C sees the halfway house as her domain. She often drops in, puts on a pinny and gets on with the cleaning and dusting. And suddenly there is this woman employed to do all those things that she's been known to do, and they clash on the way things should be done in the kitchen. And Leonard doesn't like being caught between them. It was lovely acting with Simone Lahbib, who is the real-life mum of Skye Degruttola, who plays Esme Keating, Geordie and Cath's daughter. So we've all known Simone for years – Skye was nine when she started on Grantchester and now she's 17. When Simone wasn't working, she would often come and chaperone Skye. Simone was part of the family, really, so it's gorgeous to work with her.

Did you base Mrs C on anyone you knew?

I based her on my boss when I worked at the gas board when I was 16. I answered the phone in the complaints department, which you can imagine was horrific, but she protected me. If I was ever getting a lot of abuse on the phone, she'd come straight over and take the phone and deal with the customer. She was incredibly tough and dogmatic and you wouldn't want to argue with her, and yet she had this marvellous heart. To me at 16 she looked ancient, but she was probably only in her forties or fifties. My godmother was quite like Mrs C, too – she didn't show lots of physical affection, yet you knew she loved you.

What's it like when the whole cast films together in Grantchester?

It's lovely because we're all in the same hotel with the crew as well. It's the only chance we all get to be together, because usually we film in lots of different locations nearer to London. So when we're in Grantchester we'll meet up for a glass of wine and a chat and get to know each other better. And every year we hold some sort of event for the villagers of Grantchester – we'll play rounders or cricket or have a quiz night, because they're very patient with us. When we come, we take over their village and church and stop the traffic.

You do a lot of Grantchester's comedy scenes. Do you two ever find it hard to keep a straight face?

Yeah, we're not great. Early on, it was dreadful acting with Al. We would giggle all the time, and once he starts he can't stop himself. Obviously, if we've got time pressures we're quite good. But we're all such good mates and we're having a lot of fun and there are things that set us off. Often it's when I'm doing something with a prop, like when I'm handling a tea pot or cups and saucers. They rattle so much, no one can hear anyone speak and we'll all start laughing and they'll accuse me of trying to sabotage their lines. Al was very naughty – he sent me a You Tube video of Helen Mirren holding a masterclass on how to work with props and he did his own voiceover, saying, 'Tessa, are you listening?'

Grantchester remains very popular with audiences. To what do you attribute its appeal?

I think fans like working out who the murderer is, as everyone does with murder mysteries, but I think on top of that, they like watching the relationships they like to see, I think they love the bromance of Will and Geordie. That works really well. But I think because they've both got their own family dynamics in the series. I think the audience is like watching how they're playing out too. And you know, yeah, I think I think the writing gets better and better.

I think also, there's something about the nostalgia of the 60s. You know, people love that. I love it. It's one of my favourite, favourite periods to play. Also people love Cambridgeshire. It's beautiful part of the world. Yeah. So that all helps.

Charlotte Ritchie is Bonnie Davenport



Charlotte Ritchie plays Bonnie Davenport

We got a surprise at the end of series seven of Grantchester, when suddenly Will and Bonnie got married. What did you make of that sudden event?

It was lovely. It seemed like a sweet resolution for such an eternally unmarriageable person like Will. There's something about Bonnie's complicated situation and her upfront nature that seemed to pierce through all of that, so it was really sweet that they got married. It's not necessarily saying that marriage is the happy ending, but it always felt like Will was really looking for something meaningful and it feels like he found it. And so has Bonnie, in fact – she was married before, but there wasn't any love in that relationship so it's great they both get to have a loving union.

So where do we find Will and Bonnie as season eight opens?

They're doing very well and are very much in love. I think they're very into each other and have a shared sense of humour. Bonnie's pregnant and they're looking forward to the baby coming. It's all pretty jolly. And Bonnie's son, Ernie, really loves Will, which is reciprocated. Bonnie feels pretty much like things are quite settled, which is lovely. What could happen to ruin all that?!

Yet Bonnie doesn't believe in God. Does that become a problem now that there are expectations of her as a vicar's wife?

She really doesn't have that faith that he does, but I think they're both willing to make it work. It's a really interesting question more broadly, whether people of different faiths can have relationships. They can, but I think it has to involve a lot of empathy and patience. Also, Will's religion is very, very liberal by the standards of the era, and he has that sort of curiosity and sense of exploration and development in his faith, which probably allows for Bonnie's lack of faith. But it's definitely difficult.

It seems that Bonnie needs to teach Will something about parenting, as well.

She's concerned with co-parenting, and how to show him that instilling boundaries and discipline with Ernie, versus showing love and affection, are things that go hand in hand. What's nice is that Bonnie doesn't mother Will – she's not telling him off. She says, 'You need to come with me on this,' for example on parenting Ernie. There's a sense of equity about them both taking responsibility for all elements of parenting. I think about this a lot, the way in which spiritual people can be intellectually and philosophically very compassionate and communal, but actually, in their private lives, it can be a really difficult balance. And so it's interesting that as a vicar, he's a kind of father to his parish, but when it comes to his personal life, he has to learn a lot about just the day in, day out realities of being there and making the breakfast or whatever. I think that is the big tension for him.

It becomes quite clear in early episodes that Bonnie doesn't want to be a traditional vicar's wife.

Bonnie is a really modern woman for that time. She's independent, a single mum and very enterprising and definitely not willing to settle down and be an accessory to anybody. Will is the star of the show in the village and I think that Bonnie is much more about equality and sharing things. To me, the situation she was in would have been impossible. It wasn't until the mid-70s that women could have their own bank accounts! The mind boggles.

What do you like about playing Bonnie?

She's very forthright and she's got a bit of temper, which is quite fun. I just like her. I think the show's great and I love the writing – it's so fluid and sounds so natural. I also love Bonnie's outfits – our costume designer, Louise Page, is brilliant. And having blonde hair is a nice change. Blonde just goes with so much more stuff than brunette hair. We loved adapting Bonnie's style for her pregnancy, too. Everyone had less clothing then and would probably adapt their normal clothes for maternity wear. There's an outfit I wear to church in episode one that's a matching red Sunday dress suit. The costume department cut out a piece of the skirt and added an elastic piece, but it's covered by the long top at the front. It's so beautiful and so well made. Bonnie likes her dungarees as well, so we got her a big pair, because she wants to keep stylish.

The irony cannot be not lost on you that in Grantchester you're playing a vicar's wife in a period drama, just like you did in Call the Midwife from 2015-18?

Yes, and now I'm looking for a third vicar to marry, if you hear about any shows with single vicars in them! Yes, I did hesitate over playing Bonnie, because I just thought that it might seem surreal, or kind of 'meta' that there's this actress who's really into marrying vicars on screen. But then I thought Bonnie was such a different character from Barbara. Barbara was quite sweet and Bonnie feels different. And I didn't want to be so arrogant as to think that everybody who watched Midwife would watch Grantchester. I assumed not everyone would have watched everything I've been in.

So what was it like to wear the baby bump for hours on end?

I was a bit nervous about it. I thought that not having been pregnant myself, I was worried about how to act pregnant without over-egging it. Also, I thought I might find it surreal, because I'm at an age where a lot of my friends are pregnant. But I loved it, actually. It was really fun and I got really into it – I kept patting and rubbing the bump like it was mine. So did Tom! One of the bumps was quite heavy, which helped because you want to feel more pregnant and it makes you walk in that different way. But I had to slightly add a bit of imagination to it, because I can't imagine how heavy a baby actually is.

What do you like about being in Grantchester?

The people are so kind. Honestly, it's probably one of the nicest sets I've ever been on. I really get on with Tom, and Tessa is so welcoming, and Kacey is unbelievable. Doing scenes with them is such an honour; they're so good. The crew are so nice and I'm not just saying that – Grantchester is known for being a great place to work. And I love Cambridge. I've been there quite a bit, just on holiday. Once I actually walked to Grantchester from Cambridge, although I didn't know it was Grantchester at the time. And then a few years later, I was back there filming and I was like, 'I've had loads of booze in this pub!' It's a pretty dreamy situation.

How do you get on with Tom offscreen?

He's great. My experience with Tom is that he is just very joyful and very funny. He's very childlike in a lovely way, which a lot of actors are. I feel very comfortable with him and find him very easy to work with. We often find ourselves talking all the way up until, 'Action!' which isn't ideal, and we had to nip that in the bud a bit. We laughed a lot all the way through, which is nice, especially when you're having to be romantic and intimate with someone, because it releases a lot of tension and makes you feel less self-conscious.

What Does Grantchester brings to audiences that makes it so special?

I think it's deceptive in its domestic setting. It's set in this one village with quite a small core cast, but then it deals with huge issues, the things that really do rock people's lives every day. The cancer plotline with Mrs. C last year was just so beautiful and brilliantly done. You get to know these characters and love them and then go through life with them. It's just beautifully written.



EPIISODE SYNOPSIS

Episode one

The body of a 19 year old biker is found in a field, the day after a charity motorbike race organized by Will. Ron Weller, a mechanic who trains young bikers, his son Jimmy, and many others mourn the loss of a fellow rider. But as Geordie and Will begin to investigate, they realise that beneath the happy surface there are tensions and rivalries. Geordie is surprised when DCI Wallace questions his longevity in his role. Is Wallace suggesting retirement? Will and Bonnie have settled into married life, They make a good team despite Bonnie's lack of personal faith. They are expecting their first child together, however parenting is a challenge and clashes over how to parent Ernie throw a spotlight on Will's anxiety about fatherhood. And then comes news the Bonnie's mother is sick. Leonard welcomes a new resident to his latest venture – a halfway house for ex-convicts.

Episode two

Will is involved in a fatal motorbike accident. He had promised Bonnie that he wouldn't ride the bike at all and is devastated to realise that he is responsible for the death of a fellow man. He struggles to forgive himself. DCI Elliot Wallace makes it his mission to ensure that Will is held accountable. This is personal. Geordie doesn't believe that Will is guilty but his efforts to exonerate his friend stray dangerously into acting recklessly himself. Miss Scott and Larry question his integrity. Geordie's investigations uncover another body near the scene of the accident. A victim of assault. Could the two victims have known each other? Are the incidents related? And does this exonerate Will? Mrs C, Cathy, and Jack worry for Will's state of mind, especially with Bonnie away. Meanwhile Elliot is determined to close down the Halfway house and Leonard and the residents of his halfway house face harassment from the police.

Episode three

An art exhibition at the university seems a good way to cheer Will. Bonnie is away and Cathy in particular can see that Will is still struggling to forget the accident and his responsibility for the death of a fellow man. But the drinks are disrupted by a protest, it all seems harmless high jinks until they realise that during the chaos, a valuable painting has been stolen. And a little later one of the college porters is found murdered. Is the killing linked to the protest, the theft, or is it something altogether different? Leonard is starting to find managing the halfway house is harder than anticipated and more demanding of his time. He enjoys the challenge but it is coming at the expense of his private life. Daniel encourages Leonard to consider hiring some extra help, Leonard refuses.

EPISODE SYNOPSIS

Episode four

Following an altercation with his housemates, Alfie, an Italian immigrant and one of the residents at Leonard's half way house, is found dead. The murder has been made to look like suicide but Geordie quickly realises that Alfie has been murdered and the residents are the only suspects. The neighbours are appalled and even as the police inquiry gets under way, Leonard comes under pressure to close the place down. Even Geordie feels that Leonard's management style has been indulgent when they are dealing with troubled and even dangerous men. Daniel questions what Leonard is doing. Will feels guilty that when Alfie tried to talk to him the night before he was killed, Will didn't listen. Will is tormented by his own demons, and unable to forget the motorbike accident, he fears that God has abandoned him.

Episode five

Two men are poisoned, one dies, but who was the intended target? Elliot hands the case to Larry while Geordie is placed on desk duty. He is forcing Geordie to retire. Larry is baffled by the case, the victim turns out to be a blackmailer up to something which seems to involve Hungarians exiles or possibly Russians. He wisely calls on Miss Scott for help but in the end both turn to Geordie who helps them uncover the real story. Geordie is painfully aware that something is very wrong with Will. He is really not himself, one minute depressed and moody, the next 'back to his old self' with redoubled energy. Will attempts to help Leonard in his efforts to woo the neighbours, who are still campaigning for the half way house to close. But Will loses his cool and ends up abusing the very person who has come to help. Geordie finally discovers what is really going on and confronts Will. Will realises that he has made a horrible mess of everything and, deeply ashamed, he runs.

Episode six

Will is looking to be punished. He ends up battered and bruised in the middle of nowhere before he is picked up by the local copper, Mac. Mac calls Geordie to collect him. Geordie is furious with Will, feeling he is letting down Bonnie and Ernie but before he can talk sense into him, they both become embroiled in a murder case. A farming couple have been stabbed to death.

Geordie realises that their niece and nephew, who are back at the station are the suspects. Before he and Mac get back, Will is abducted and forced to 'drive away' by the prime suspect, a troubled lad of sixteen and his young sister. Geordie and Mac catch up with these suspected killers but it is Will who eventually discovers the truth about what really happened and why. By the time Geordie drives Will back to Grantchester, Will is a changed man, determined to put what has happened behind him. In his and Geordie's absence Leonard has been the unprotected victim of Elliot's vendetta. The half way house is again raided but by now there are so few residents left that Leonard knows it must close. Until Larry learns to do the right thing and confronts Elliot with unforeseen consequences for everyone. Will is reunited with Bonnie and seeks her forgiveness just as she goes into labour.



Cast Credits

Geordie Keating

Will Davenport

Leonard Finch

Mrs Chapman

Cathy Keating

Jack Chapman

Daniel Marlowe

Bonnie Evans

ROBSON GREEN

TOM BRITTNEY

AL WEAVER

TESSA PEAKE-JONES

KACEY AINSWORTH

NICK BRIMBLE

OLIVER DIMSDALE

CHARLOTTE RITCHIE



Production Credits

Executive Producers	EMMA KINGSMAN-LLOYD, DAISY COULAM, REBECCA EATON SUSANNE SIMPSON, ROBSON GREEN, TOM BRITTNEY
Series created by	DAISY COULAM
Based on the novels by	JAMES RUNCIE
Producer	TIM WHITBY
Director	ROB EVANS, AL WEAVER, MARTIN SMITH
Written by	RICHARD COOKSON, HELEN BLACK, ANITA VETTESSE, KARLA WILLIAMS
Production Designer	ROBERT FOSTER
Director of Photography	JAMES SWIFT
Music	JOHN LUNN
Hair & Make Up Designer	MELANIE LINDSEY
Costume Designer	LOUISE PAGE
Line Producer	LORRAINE GOODMAN
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