Grantchester
A new six part drama for ITV

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“As a priest, isn’t everything our business? There’s no part of the human heart which is not our responsibility” – Sidney Chambers

James Norton (Happy Valley, Death Comes to Pemberley) plays the role of Sidney Chambers in new six-part drama Grantchester produced by Lovely Day in association with Masterpiece.

Robson Green (Reckless, Wire In The Blood) joins him as plain speaking, over-worked Police Inspector, Geordie Keating.

Set in 1953 in the beautiful county of Cambridgeshire, Sidney’s unlikely partnership with gruff, down to earth Geordie is central to Grantchester. Geordie’s methodical approach to policing complements Sidney’s more intuitive techniques of coaxing information from witnesses and suspects.

They are partners in crime and forge a true friendship as each offers a different insight into the crimes they begin to unravel.

Morven Christie (Hunted, Twenty Twelve) plays beautiful heiress Amanda Kendall, whose love for Sidney, although reciprocated, doesn’t have a future, as her father wants her to marry an aristocratic beau.

Tessa Peake-Jones (Marchlands and of course Raquel in Only Fools and Horses) plays Sidney’s housekeeper, the indomitable Mrs Maguire who keeps him in check and does her best to keep his
chaotic vicarage presentable and respectable. He also has gorgeous black Labrador puppy, Dickens, for company.

Kacey Ainsworth (*EastEnders, Holby Blue*) plays Geordie’s loving wife Cathy. Cathy is a busy mother of three with a fourth child on the way.

Sidney’s moustachioed curate, Leonard Finch, is played by Al Weaver (*Southcliffe, Secret State*), whilst pale, interesting and stunning widow, Hildegard Staunton, is played by German actress Pheline Roggan.

Adapted from the novel, ‘Sidney Chambers and the Shadow of Death’ by James Runcie, the series is written for ITV by Daisy Coulam, who has previously scripted *EastEnders* and *Casualty*.

The series has been commissioned from Lovely Day, a sister company of Kudos, in association with Masterpiece. It is produced by Emma Kingsman-Lloyd (*DCI Banks, Life of Crime, Lip Service*) and executive produced by Lovely Day’s Managing Director and founder Diederick Santer (*Cutting It, Jane Eyre, EastEnders*). The Lead Director for the series is Harry Bradbeer (*Prisoners’ Wives, The Hour, The Cops, This Life*).

Set against the backdrop of the real hamlet of Grantchester, the drama focuses upon the life of Sidney Chambers, a charismatic, charming clergyman who turns investigative vicar when one of his parishioners dies in suspicious circumstances.

A tall and handsome man with a love of warm beer and hot jazz, Sidney is self-effacing, great company and a true romantic. He conscientiously undertakes his parish duties at the church of St Andrew and St Mary’s, and has the ear of his congregation who respect his unique moral insights and dry humour. Sidney thinks the best of people, but intuitively asks all the right questions which often results in an epiphany!

Troubled by nightmares and recurring flashbacks to the time he served in the Scot’s Guards, Sidney is the moral compass of the drama with a desire to put right the wrongs of the past – “we cannot erase our pasts however hard we try. Instead we must carry them with us into the future.”

The drama has been commissioned for ITV by Director of Drama Steve November and Controller of Drama Victoria Fea.

“Grantchester is an exciting commission for ITV Drama and we’re delighted to be working with Diederick Santer,” said Steve. “Daisy Coulam’s scripts are vivid and beautifully written with some wonderful characters at the heart of the stories. There’s an emotional truth and gravity to this series which makes it a very compelling drama.”

Executive Producer Diederick Santer said: “Grantchester is a real labour of love for me and Lovely Day. Sidney is a charming, but complex character, a man of faith burdened by his past despite a distinguished wartime record, he’s funny, dashing and inquisitive. He loves being a parish priest in the exquisite village of Grantchester, but somehow it’s not enough and he still finds time to fall in and out of love and solve crimes. James Runcie has created this brilliant character and this glorious world, which Daisy Coulam is now bringing to the screen in her wonderful and lavish scripts, and I can’t wait for ITV’s audience to get to know him too.”

There are expectations that Grantchester will do well in the US, as well as the UK.

“We have high hopes that our American audience will fall for the handsome (and troubled) vicar, Sidney Chambers, and we look forward to watching him follow in the footsteps of those illustrious crime-
solvers, Morse, Lewis, Poirot, Foyle, and of course, Sherlock Holmes,” said Executive Producer for Masterpiece, Rebecca Eaton.

Also joining the cast are Fiona Button as Sidney’s younger sister Jennifer Chambers, Ukweli Roach as Jennifer’s boyfriend, Johnny Johnson, Tom Austen as Guy Hopkins and Pip Torrens as Amanda’s aristocratic father, Sir Edward Kendall.

Note to Editors:

James Runcie is the Head of Literature at the Southbank Centre, an award-winning film-maker and the author of six novels. *Sidney Chambers and The Shadow of Death*, the first in *The Grantchester Mysteries*’ six book series, was published by Bloomsbury in 2012. The second, *Sidney Chambers and The Perils of the Night*, was published in 2013 and the third *Sidney Chambers and the Problem of Evil* was published earlier this year. Each volume contains several inter-connected stories that feature the clergyman detective Canon Sidney Chambers. James Runcie lives in London and Edinburgh and is the son of ex-Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie.

Lovely Day is a production company founded by Diederick Santer in 2010, with Kudos. Working with UK and international broadcasters, and with the finest established and up-and-coming British TV talent, Lovely Day is fast becoming a trusted maker of distinctive, loved and popular TV drama and comedy entertainment.

Masterpiece is the longest-running prime time drama producer in American television and has remained steadfast in its commitment to bring the best in literature-based drama, mysteries filled with eclectic characters, and groundbreaking contemporary works.
Where does ‘Grantchester’ come from?

In October 2011, Sue Swift, who scouts books for Lovely Day and Kudos, gave me a book outline to read. She had a feeling it was something I might like.

The book was by James Runcie, ‘Sidney Chambers and the Shadow of Death’. And Sue was right. I loved it, and could immediately see its potential for TV. Not only that, I could recognise Sidney, his view of the world, his theology, his world, and his faith.

There’s an unlikely thing that James Runcie and I have in common, and that is that we both have bishops for dads. (Well, an archbishop, in James’s case, which obviously makes him the winner.) And although I only got to know James once I made a bid for his wonderful book, our dads were very close, worked together for many years, and given the similarities in our upbringings and in the values of our dads, we do have a kind of shared experience. And it is this experience that I recognised so clearly in his book.

Robert Runcie, was Archbishop of Canterbury in the 1980s. He married Charles and Diana, he took on Thatcher. And although the fictional Sidney Chambers is not the real Robert Runcie, many of his characteristics and much of his history, he shares with Robert. His look, his tastes, his war record, his particular brand of faith. So for me, and for my father in particular who has been reading the scripts and giving some practical advice to the production, Sidney is a character we feel we know very well indeed.

Another point of connection for me is Cambridge. I’m not quite old enough to have been in Cambridge in the 50s, but I do remember Cambridge in the 1970s. Not that different, just slightly bigger collars. So this show really is a step back into the past for me.

We took James for lunch, had a chat, and were thrilled when we won the rights to the books. In March 2012 I sent it to Daisy Coulam, a brilliant, rising star of a screenwriter.

I’d first worked with Daisy in 2006 when she was starting out as a writer on EastEnders. I had championed her through my time there, and when I set up ‘Lovely Day’ she was one of the first writers I wanted to work with.
Daisy loved the book, got straight to the heart of the character, listened patiently to all of my dad and Cambridge stuff, and created her very own take on the book. We took her to the ITV drama commissioners Laura Mackie and Sally Haynes, and pitched the show. They immediately got it, and commissioned a script.

When they moved on from ITV in early 2013 I was at first worried, but I’m delighted to say that Steve November and Victoria Fea who took over grabbed a firm hold of the project, brought new thoughts and direction to it, and in June of that year Steve rang me up and ordered six episodes. With one condition – that Daisy write all six! Fine by me. I grinned for a week.

And over the last few months we’ve quietly put the production together – developing the scripts with producer Emma Kingsman-Lloyd and script editor Steve Searle, bringing Harry Bradbeer’s clear vision for the show and obsession with the real, and assembling this glorious cast led by the wonderful James Norton.

There’s been another important piece of casting – the village. Grantchester is a real place. So last year I spent some time talking to and getting to know the people here and sharing with them something of our plans. I hope I am building a show to last and for that reason, I didn’t want to assume anything. I didn’t want to assume that I could just turn up here with lots of trucks and people and do whatever I wanted. So we spent a lot of time and effort discussing our plans with the people of the village, involving them (some of them are extras in the show!), and making them part of the programme. It’s named after their beautiful village, so it’s in some way their show too.

Because the show is rooted in real things – a real place, a real person – we hope that the show has a bit of grit and darkness. Yes, this is comfy crime in bygone Britain, but the sun doesn’t always shine, there’s not much food in the larder, the war only ended eight years ago and we don’t really talk about it. Sidney is very real and human – he may be a vicar but he is no superhuman. Like all of us he is flesh and blood and suffers from human weakness. Sidney never has a crisis of faith – instead he is locked in a crisis of self.

I grew up surrounded by vicars, and they are an entertaining bunch. I hope that the real aspects, and the many fictional stories we’ve created about these characters, prove engaging and entertaining for the ITV audience.
“We live in this incredibly shouty, brash, crowded world. There are other ways of living. And there are other ways of thinking about people.”

James Runcie wanted to write a series of detective novels that would also chronicle the social history of Britain and how things have changed since the 1950s.

“It’s very tempting to talk about post-war Britain starting in 1945. But for me the key year is 1953 because it’s the beginning of the end of rationing, the Coronation of Elizabeth II and the discovery of DNA,” he explains.

“The year when Britain is first working out what kind of country it wants to be and how it could be a better and fairer society with housing, education and health care.

“We have moved from that society in the 50s and 60s to a society now which is almost post-welfare and post-religious. An age of, ‘How can I be famous?’

“How have we got to that?

“But I wanted to have humour in it too. Overheard conversations and the ridiculous nature of English humour. Loving, humane and funny as well as big issues about life and death.”

James is author of The Grantchester Mysteries, a series of novels with unconventional clergyman-detective Sidney Chambers at their heart.

The first book - Sidney Chambers and the Shadow of Death - published in 2012 forms the basis of ITV’s six-part Grantchester, adapted for the screen by Daisy Coulam.

James’ late father Robert Runcie was once, like Sidney, a village priest. Before he went on to later jobs, including Archbishop of Canterbury between 1980 and 1991.

Also like this fictional character, Robert served in the Scots Guards during World War Two, fighting and killing other human beings.

“I wanted to talk about that social history of Britain through the eyes of a clergyman, loosely based on my father’s experiences.
“Mostly imaginative but certainly a springboard was my father in trying to develop a series that was ethical as well as thrilling in terms of its plot and intrigue.”

Grantchester is filmed and set in the village of the same name just outside Cambridge, which featured in the 1912 Rupert Brooke poem ‘The Old Vicarage, Grantchester.’

“I was born in Cambridge and went to university there, as did my daughter. My father went to Oxford University but trained in Cambridge as a priest.

“He went on to be head of a college in Oxfordshire and we lived in a small village called Cuddesdon, just outside Oxford. So I was brought up in a village and knew about village life...and death.

“When I was six-years-old somebody came to the door and said, ‘Is your dad in?’ When I told them he was not they said, ‘Well can you give him a message? Kevin Dymock has been knocked off his motorbike, he’s got internal bleeding, he may not last the night. Tell your dad.’

“There’s a whole part of that churchyard in Cuddesdon where my father buried every single person. So I saw the life of a vicar who was never off duty, who’d fought in the war and who had experienced death.

“At the same time on television were things like All Gas And Gaiters, Bless Me Father and Dick Emery, in which vicars were ridiculed as silly, stupid characters with sing-song voices. Figures of fun. Yet it didn’t seem to me that it was much fun being a vicar.

“So I wanted to set something in a small community that needed to be iconic and English. I settled on Grantchester, partly because of the Rupert Brooke poem - ‘And is there still honey for tea?’ - written by somebody who died in a war.

“It’s very important that Sidney has seen death, that he is familiar with death, that he knows death. I remember my father said to me once, ‘I don’t suppose you’ve buried many of your friends?’ Which is a very shocking sentence.


James Norton plays Sidney, a young man with a love of jazz, warm beer and whisky.

“Sidney Chambers is a loveable, committed priest who doesn’t quite know what being a priest means fully. He tries to think the best of people and thinks it’s important to hate the sin but love the sinner.

“His principal characteristic is curiosity. He’s interested in people and they trust him. So people tell him things and he can go where the police cannot. But what does he do with the information he is given? Who can he trust and who can he love?

“He’s not a goody-goody. He’s got three main flaws: He drinks too much; He can be indiscreet, and he’s a little bit vain. But I hope all those flaws are forgivable.

“It’s partly about the pressure to be good, the pressure to behave well. It’s exhausting being good all the time.

“We are very lucky to have James Norton at a very brilliant stage of his career after Death Comes to Pemberley and Happy Valley, where he played Tommy Lee Royce. This is obviously a very different role.

“From psychopath to vicar is probably better than vicar to psychopath,” smiles James.
“The two key things about James Norton are intelligence and charm. It’s bizarre that he studied theology at university and knows his stuff. So you don’t have to explain that St Matthew was the name of a gospel and not a contemporary hip hop singer.

“I find it really strange watching him because he doesn’t look a million miles away from what my father looked like, especially in the Army flashbacks.

“It is beyond weird seeing somebody loosely based on your father who looks a bit like your nephew playing a loose version of your dad while being younger than you are. That is quite odd.”

What does James think his father would have made of Sidney and his TV adventures?

“The primary thing is he’d have been very amused by it. I think he would have loved it and would have laughed at it. He would have been secretly proud and he wouldn’t have told me.”

Sidney’s housekeeper Mrs Maguire, played by Tessa Peake-Jones, was named after a woman who was once secretary to James’ father.

“I was too little to remember Mrs Maguire but she was a very certain woman whose husband had left her. His new woman came round to pick up his stuff because he was too scared. And as she left with his things, she said, rubbing it in a bit, ‘Oh, what does he like for his tea?’

“Mrs Maguire said, ‘Well, I just lost it vicar, and I said the rudest word I’ve ever said in my life. I said, Harpic!’

“I adore Tessa Peake-Jones in the way she plays our fictional Mrs Maguire. She is fantastic. Of course the temptation is in later books to write more for her, should we be lucky enough to see the TV series continue.”

Robson Green plays Inspector Geordie Keating, the Cambridge detective who is initially dismissive of Sidney and then realises how useful he could be to police investigations.

“Inspector Keating is named after my friend Roly Keating, who was at the BBC and is Head of the British Library.

“Amanda Kendall (Morven Christie) is named after Amanda Farnsworth, who ran the BBC Olympics coverage, and her partner Bridget Kendall, a BBC Diplomatic Correspondent. Bridget and I went into the BBC together and she is one of my best friends. And so it is a joke.”

As, in part, is the fact Grantchester’s vicar drinks whisky.

“I wanted a vicar who hated sherry. I’m not a vicar but I certainly drank a prodigious amount of sherry when I was younger. I can’t stand it now when I’m offered some brown sweet sherry.

“I wanted to break stereotypes. So he prefers whisky and is not a priest who has been a pacifist or conscientious objector. He has killed and has a knowledge of death. That is a fact of war and the obvious question is, ‘How can killing be an act of courage in wartime and murder in peacetime?’

“And are there other levels of killing? Which we address in this series in a story involving mercy killing, which one might call euthanasia and one might call murder. An issue still being debated today.
“As well as the murder plots, one of the ideas is to take moral extremes and ideas and look at them. Are there limits to forgiveness? What is friendship? What is love? What is commitment? What is discretion? What is trust? Is loyalty to friendship more important than loyalty to the state or the law of the land?

“I hope each episode has an added flavour. You have the crime plot. On top of that you get a moral dilemma, some comedy and an over-arching narrative about the future of the characters that goes beyond that episode.

“This is a period of recovery from war. It’s important that one of the characters - Hildegard Staunton (Pheline Roggan) - is German. I was brought up with German au pair girls who ended up marrying clergymen.

“Of course attitudes to Germans were not straightforward after the war. And in some cases still aren’t today. British holidaymakers go to Italy and France but not many go to Germany.”

James continues: “We tend to romanticise the 1950s as this golden age of Britain. There is a longing for the past. And sometimes it’s a past that never was.

“There is a tendency towards beauty and beautiful frocks and costumes. But for lots of people it wasn’t that beautiful. It wasn’t beautiful if you were gay because it was illegal and a punishable offence. And it was believed it could be cured by electrolysis or by having a good chat with your doctor.

“You see in this series curate Leonard Finch (Al Weaver) who has to keep his homosexuality secret. Whether it’s practicing or not. Just his instincts or fear he might be homosexual. At the beginning he’s not sure whether he is or not.

“There was also still the death penalty. So if you’re wrongly convicted of murder there’s no going back because you are hanged.

“And there were limited career opportunities for women. The expectation was a woman would be a home-maker. Not that there is anything wrong with that. But there were limited opportunities and there certainly wasn’t really such a thing as feminism.

“So you’ve got terror of your own sexuality which is a really awful situation to be in. The serious implication of a wrongful accusation of crime that might result in death by hanging and the difficulty of women in forging a career.

“I wanted to tell a story of a group of people over time and see what happens to them. A group of characters who are on the verge of finding out who they are and their place in the world. Hopefully we come to grow with them, to know them, love them, see their mistakes and how they change and develop.”

Not forgetting a certain black Labrador puppy who arrives as a present for Sidney.

“Dickens the dog gives him companionship. Going for walks, thinking about things, he can talk to the dog. He’s also been given the real name of Dickens off screen, to avoid any confusion.”

Writer, producer and director James is Head of Literature and Spoken Word at the Southbank Centre in London. He worked with production company Lovely Day when they bought the rights to his Grantchester books.

“There was never a question I would write the TV scripts. Mainly because I have to do a book a year and I’ve got a day job at the Southbank Centre.”
“Daisy Coulam does what I can’t do. Daisy is brilliant at plot. And the plots are much more intricate and tighter than mine. I like a bit of slack and bagginess and you can’t have that on telly. So she’s cut out a lot of the old self-indulgence.

“The process was basically just handing it over, talking to Daisy quite a lot and then letting her get on with it. I was worried the humour and the ethics would go and neither of them have gone.

“You have to trust the person doing it and I think she has done a brilliant job. Daisy has got the characters and run with them. She really understands them.”

Originally the plan was for a series of six novels taking the story from 1953 to 1978.

“Volume three, published this year, has only got four stories in it instead of six because they’re longer. I think it might end up being eight novels. I’ve had to slow down because I’ve become more interested in the characters.”

Filming in Grantchester was a community event, with local residents involved as extras.

“I’m very pleased about that. On the last day there was a film crew versus villagers cricket match, which was such a happy evening.

“James Norton and Robson Green played along with the crew and, appropriately, they lost. In a later novel there is actually a cricket match. So I said to the locals, ‘Well, you’re all auditioning now!’ It was a lovely sense of community and Grantchester looks wonderful on screen.

“Obviously landscape doesn’t change that much but it’s quite hard to find 1950s locations. I wanted a sense of rural England near a town, near a university, near a capital city. And this location was perfect.”

James hopes viewers will be entertained and more by Grantchester.

“I’d like them to laugh, to think about the morality of everyday life, to look more kindly on vicars, to think about the moral consequences of actions and perhaps try and be kinder and gentler to people who aren’t as fortunate as themselves.

“I’d also like to put in a plea for tolerance of other people, love, understanding, patience, curiosity and listening. To embrace difference and the idea that life is sometimes a little bit more complicated than we think it is.

“It is a response against the crass, shouty solipsism of contemporary society and the brash ‘me, me, me’ of market forces.

“I’d certainly like a break from that with an understanding that it doesn’t have to be like this and we can think about community more, rather than ourselves.”
JAMES NORTON IS SIDNEY CHAMBERS

James Norton was involved in a blazing start to one of the stories in Grantchester.

“I was so excited,” smiles the actor who plays 1950s’ clergyman-detective Sidney Chambers in the six-part series.

“Sidney runs into a burning stately home to rescue a woman and they allowed me to do that stunt, which was such fun.

“I was in pyjamas running through a burning corridor and it felt very real. The special effects guys are incredible. They were there for several days beforehand to prepare the building for those scenes.

“It was amazing because we went back the next day and the room which had been black and charred with debris everywhere was back to normal. Extraordinary.”

Sidney is a man who fought and killed in the Second World War, likes jazz, drinks too much, attracts female attention and just happens to be the vicar of a Cambridgeshire village.

“He’s dealing with the same trials and tribulations that young men and women have to deal with. But ultimately Sidney is trying to do the right thing.

“Everyone thinks he must have got away with not fighting in the war or was a padre. But Sidney has taken human life and probably had more than his fair share of horror.

“Like many of those brave men he was a hero but with that came immense cost, reflected in his drinking and troubled romances.
“The fact he is a vicar doesn’t distort the very normal journey he’s going on as a young man. If anything it makes all those trials, obstacles, relationships, traumas and temptations more acute.”

James was educated at Ampleforth College in North Yorkshire which is run by Benedictine monks. He went on to study theology at Cambridge University.

“It was a happy co-incidence for this show. While I was at Ampleforth I became fascinated with religion, from an academic perspective, and studied theology as a result of that.

“Half the people on the Cambridge course studied it from a premise of belief and ordination, going off into their respective faiths. And I was in the other half as much more of an academic pursuit.

“Having also travelled around the world and spent a lot of time in Nepal and India, my degree was mostly based around Hinduism and Buddhism. So I didn’t actually do much Christian theology.

“But when I was at Cambridge I did more theatre than theology, much to my professor’s and supervisor’s annoyance. And then took a complete oblique U-turn and went into theatre, which I’d always loved from an early age.”

A theology degree from Cambridge, just down the road from Grantchester, can’t have done him any harm when it came to auditioning for the role?

“It feels like there should be some divine intervention attached to this story. But, no, sadly it was very mundane. The role came in the usual way from my agent and then the normal audition process.

“But it was a very fortuitous coincidence, having done theology at Cambridge, which I then was able to talk about in the audition. It was a great opening gambit. You could see their ears prick up when I told them.”

James Runcie, author of The Grantchester Mysteries, is the son of the late Robert Runcie, who was once a village priest himself before later becoming Archbishop of Canterbury.

Sidney is loosely inspired by Robert, who also served in the Scots Guards during the war.

“I read Robert Runcie’s autobiography, which was fascinating. You could see all of the parts which James had taken from his life.

“On the days James visited the set I was aware of the fact I was playing a version of his dad. Which was quite strange. But while Robert obviously inspired Sidney, it’s not biographical.

“Mark Santer, the father of our executive producer Diederick Santer, was also a Bishop and a friend of Robert’s.”

Grantchester is a very different role to James’ last TV drama appearance, as psychopath killer Tommy Lee Royce in BBC1’s Happy Valley.

“Sidney is a good man. He sees the world as essentially a benign place. Which is completely the opposite to Tommy, who saw it as a very hostile place.

“I was warned I would be bashed about the head with handbags. But I wasn’t. Maybe because I was filming Grantchester when Happy Valley was on screen so I wasn’t actually out in public very much.
“You inevitably get members of the public watching filming of Grantchester and occasionally I could see people who were looking at me, thinking, ‘Where have I seen him before?’ Then the penny dropped and they would go, ‘You’re the psychopath!’”

“I was so blessed with going from Happy Valley to Grantchester because they’re very different roles but also both real people, along with relationships and situations we can all empathise with.”

Sidney is on the right side of the law and someone people confide in. So when he suspects a murder may have taken place, he sets off for Cambridge Police Station. There he meets an initially dismissive Inspector Geordie Keating, played by Robson Green.

“They are total chalk and cheese and both quite wary of each other at the beginning. But then very quickly they realise they can be useful for each other.

“Sidney distracting himself from both his baggage and slightly mundane life of a vicar. And Geordie realises Sidney can find things out where the police cannot. Particularly in those days when a vicar was such a powerful person in society.

“Eventually a friendship is formed and they become close friends, drinking beer and playing backgammon in the pub, which was fun to film. Robson doesn’t play backgammon and I love it. So he took a lot of pleasure in saying, as Geordie Keating, ‘I won!’

“Robson is such a nice man. We were aware the series required a really good chemistry between us. Meeting him for the first time was funny because I’ve obviously known him for years, watching him on screen, but we’d never met.

“I walked in, gave him a big bear hug and immediately regretted it. I thought, ‘I’ve stepped way over the mark.’ But, of course, it’s Robson Green. So he gave me a big hug back and it was completely lovely.”

Sidney’s housekeeper Mrs Maguire is played by Tessa Peake-Jones.

“I worked with Tessa last year on a film called Bonobo, so we already knew each other. Both her and Robson are stars in their own right but just so grounded.

“Sidney and Mrs Maguire bring out almost the worst in each other. And the best. They bicker like mother and son. But there are moments of incredible tenderness when they realise they are very fond of one another and rely on each other. It’s a lovely relationship.

“We also have the wonderful Al Weaver as curate Leonard Finch. So the three of us are in scenes at the vicarage and we filmed a lot together, becoming a little trio.”

The opening scene of Grantchester sees Sidney and his friend Amanda (Morven Christie) plunging into the River Cam.

“We shot that in April and it was quite chilly. But I enjoyed it because I love wild swimming. I have a thing for swimming in lochs, lakes and rivers.

“So I was really keen. But because of the insurance I wasn’t allowed to do Sidney’s dive into the river. That’s a stunt double. I couldn’t get enough of filming in the river and it’s a great start to the series.”

There is an undercurrent of sadness and loneliness about Sidney which lifts when he’s with Amanda.
“He is obviously dealing with depression due to his war experiences. His work in the village and the constant duties of being a vicar are a way of distracting from that.

“Sidney and Amanda are so free and easy together. She’s such a free spirit and a young, modern woman who releases him from all of the knotted up tension. So is very good for him.

“But he has never told Amanda he loves her. Part of that is because he doesn’t think he is good enough for her. He says there was never a moment to tell her. And she says, ‘Yes, there was.’”

A young German widow called Hildegarde (Pheline Roggan) also features in Sidney’s life.

“There’s definitely a spark between them when she comes along. Sidney realises Hildegarde is a very different energy and person from Amanda. But equally is very good for him. She calms him down.

“I think our screenwriter Daisy Coulam intended for the audience to be split. Not to all want him to end up with one or the other. There should be an Amanda camp and a Hildegarde camp. Seeing the merit in both relationships.”

There was more action for James when he filmed scenes of Sidney and Hildegarde punting.

“Having been to Cambridge, I love punting. But again they weren’t very keen insurance-wise on me doing it. There was a supporting artist playing the guy renting us the punt. So I cheekily said to him, ‘When they call cut, just keep untying.’ And I punted off. It was the last shot of the day and I could hear the producer saying, ‘Come back!’

“We were very lucky on this job. The weather was kind to us and we’d spend days lying back drinking ginger beer - doubling for champagne - in a punt on the Cam with the sun shining. It was one of those jobs with a lot of ‘pinch me’ moments.”

That included the arrival of black labrador puppy Dickens as a companion for Sidney.

“I had a black labrador from the age of three called Ella and I’ve never had a dog since. So when Dickens arrived, it was back to my childhood.

“Originally we were meant to have three different Dickens in order to show the passage of time. But Dickens grew so quickly that we ended up having him the whole way through. And the owner called him Dickens for real.

“When Dickens was on set he was brilliant. But occasionally we’d have endless bloopers when we just needed him to walk from A to B. Nine out of ten times he would do it but then he would just get full of sausages and go, ‘I’m not doing it.’”

Motivation wasn’t a problem for James’ father Hugh, who is making a habit of appearing as a supporting artist in his son’s screen dramas.

“My dad has recently retired from being a teacher and he loves being an extra. He was in Death Comes to Pemberley first of all and has been in my last three telly jobs.

“None of my family are in this world at all so he’s very proud to say that I got the genes from him. For Grantchester he was a passer-by outside the police station and looked great in a three-piece suit. The crew all called him ‘Papa Norton!’”

Happily there were no mishaps for James during Sidney’s bike-riding scenes.
“Again, luckily having been to Cambridge as a student I’d done the same thing - cycling down King’s Parade at ferocious speed and I was ready for those scenes. There might have been the odd trouser leg caught in the chain but no accidents.”

Sidney is a vicar who drinks whisky, not sherry.

“As an actor you read that and just think, ‘This is fantastic.’ Sidney has his dog collar, which in many people’s modern eyes is an obstacle. But with his whisky, jazz and women he’s just a normal free spirit. The boozing is sad because it’s a dependency but equally it tells such a great story about him.

“Sidney is flawed. He steps out of line a lot. There’s this idea that people who are very religious think themselves incredibly clean and perfect. And actually that’s not the case at all.”

Adds James: “Grantchester is so much more than a bog standard murder mystery because it doesn’t shy away from the issues of the period that are also relevant now. For example, a story about euthanasia.

“It also reminds people how things have changed. This is a time when homosexuality was still illegal. You could be sent to prison and spend long periods in solitary confinement. It’s good to remind people how recent that kind of prejudice was, how far we have come and how positive that is.

“All the murders are never meaningless. They’re murders of passion, love, loss or jealousy. You’re always watching a story about real people and real lives at a time when the death penalty and hanging was still in force.”

James says filming in the real village of Grantchester, including the parish church of St Andrew and St Mary, was a joy.

“Grantchester is beautiful without being chocolate-boxy. It’s preserved in this period and is gorgeous and quaint. But it’s never self-consciously so.

“It was a magical bubble. The days we were able to film there were very special and they definitely anchored the rest of the series. It gave us that physical relationship with the place.

“And what was lovely was the production really nurtured the relationship we had with the village and the people who live there. So that was a very healthy and happy relationship. They saw how exciting it was to have a film crew there and we were very grateful they were so welcoming.

“There was a lady called Pat who just absolutely loved us being there. She said it was the most exciting thing that had happened to her in years.

“When you’ve been on a film set for a long time and you’re very tired, you can often forget the novelty of it and the excitement. Then you have this influx of local people who were so keen to get involved, which meant we were all injected with this excitement and energy.

“We had a film crew versus villagers cricket match at the end of the shoot. None of us had played cricket for years. The last time I picked up a cricket bat was when I was 13. But I ended up top scorer. I was lucky because I went lower down in the order, by which time they were putting on their more friendly bowlers.

“I really enjoyed that cricket match. It was great fun and, again, a good example of how the production and village got on so well together. And afterwards we all went down to the pub.”
Filming scenes of Sidney’s sermons in the real Grantchester church also bowled James over.

“It was special. Even if you’re a believer or not. I’m not sure where I stand but I’m certainly not a practising anything. But when you go into a church or a religious temple of some sort, you get that sense of reverence which is automatic in everyone.

“Then you put on all the robes, start going through the rituals yourself and it’s crazy. It really does flavour it. The air suddenly changes. It becomes electric.

“Also what made it all the more poignant was the congregation was mostly made up of the real congregation of Grantchester. So we had half extras, supporting artists from agencies, and then the other half were the villagers.

“They were all sitting there very excited and if felt incredibly authentic from my point of view. Although they were all obviously bored out of their minds after take 17,” he laughs.

Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams spoke at the parish church a week before Grantchester started filming there.

“I heard he gave us his blessing. So maybe we have Rowan Williams to thank for the whole film shoot being so harmonious.”

His visit co-incided with the May retirement of Grantchester’s real priest-in-charge Stuart Mews, having reached the age of 70.

James recalls: “He was just retiring as we were filming. So I had a lot of the villagers asking me, semi-seriously, whether I would consider taking on the role for real.

“And I, half seriously, thought, ’Maybe I could!’

“If the acting doesn’t work out...”
“It’s one of the best things I’ve done in the 30 years I’ve been on TV.”

Robson Green loved working on Grantchester so much that he didn’t want filming to end.

“You get to that stage in your life and career where you really want to enjoy what you do the majority of the time.

“The scripts for Grantchester were sent over to me when I was in Thailand doing Strike Back and within an hour I said yes.

“It’s beautifully written with stories just as relevant today as they were in the 1950s. The themes are universal and the crimes are ones of passion. There’s a real truth to it.

“No a word of the script was changed during filming. And I mean not a word. That’s a first. I just loved every second and didn’t want Grantchester to stop.”

Robson plays Inspector Geordie Keating, a Cambridge police detective who is sought out by Grantchester vicar Sidney Chambers (James Norton).

“Geordie grew up in the north east. How he ended up in Cambridge isn’t explained. But that’s where he works.

“He’s fought in World War Two for King and country but came back to a land not fit for a King. A no-nonsense, plain-speaking man who holds the mental scars of the war, which only manifest themselves later in the series.
“Geordie is a good man. An honest man with a definite sense of right and wrong. He knows what it is to lose a comrade, to lose someone he cares about. He knows what motivates people to kill.

“He doesn’t suffer fools gladly. So when Sidney comes to see him and says he suspects a man has been murdered, he dismisses him and says, ‘Why don’t you go back to church and pray for the wicked?’

“He tells Sidney to steer well clear of murky waters and not to stick his nose into police business. But then Geordie realises people tell the clergy secrets, confess their sins and misdeeds. That’s a really handy tool for a detective.

“So it’s an evolving relationship that turns into this very endearing duo. Two friends who depend on each other. You really care about them and want them to stay together.”

Geordie and Sidney enjoy regular games of backgammon in the pub, along with the odd glass of beer.

Off screen James Norton is a fan of the game while Robson doesn’t play. Perhaps one of the reasons why Geordie takes great satisfaction in beating Sidney.


“And it’s the same with this. I said, ‘So how do I win this game? Just give me three moves that’ll make me win.’ That was good.

“When we filmed those scenes I’d just arrived back in Britain from working on Strike Back, a Lieutenant Colonel saving the Western world from a nuclear missile attack by the North Koreans.

“I land at Heathrow, go for a costume check and then am propelled into those pub scenes while in jet lag hell. But for some reason it just brought out the best in the scene. Again, the writing was perfect so I wasn’t concerned about it. They’re lovely scenes in the pub. I really liked them.

“James Norton is a star in the real sense. His kindness, charisma, talent and his joy for doing what he does were the best ingredients for any captain of that ship. It was relentless for him. Non-stop.

“I’ve been in that position before and I didn’t deal with it as well as James did. A lot of it had to do with the fact I was running a company as well. But James was a diamond.

“He’s going to fly. A name that is going to be up there with the best of them. A wonderfully talented, charismatic actor. Compelling to watch. His talent shines through.

“I never missed a second of James in Happy Valley and he makes very good choices. You just wouldn’t expect a transition from a pathological serial destroyer to this wonderful, inquisitive, charming member of the clergy.

“My relationship with James reminded me of the time when I was with Jerome Flynn and Gary Love in Soldier Soldier. The kind of joy I had then.

“If you get on with someone socially and behind the lens it will manifest in front of it. That’s very much the case with Grantchester and James. I’ve got nothing but good things to say about him.”

Geordie is married to Cathy, played by former EastEnders actress Kacey Ainsworth. They have three children with a fourth on the way.
“He is devoted to his wife and family. They are the most important things in his life. You see what he has to deal with when the baby has whooping cough.

“The advances in medicine we have today didn’t exist in the 50s. So you expected the worst if a child had whooping cough or influenza. It was just something that happened. That’s why families were really large back then.”

There was a surprise in store for Robson when he first met one of his older screen children.

“This eight-year-old girl comes up to me and says, ‘Hello, I’m playing your daughter in this.’ And I’m looking at her thinking, ‘You remind me of someone.’ I shake her hand. And she says, ‘My mum knows you. This is my mum.’

“I look up and I go, ‘I know you...’ And she went, ‘Robson. It’s Simone.’ It was Simone Lahbib from Wire In The Blood! Her daughter plays my daughter. I remember Skye being in my arms as a baby when she brought her to Northumberland when she was filming Wire.

“I hadn’t looked at the call sheet for the names of the chaperones. I just look at my call time and make-up. It was bizarre and an absolute coincidence.”

Grantchester is based on the novels by James Runcie, son of the late Robert Runcie who was Archbishop of Canterbury.

“I had the privilege of meeting Robert Runcie when I played Jesus in the York Mystery Plays in 1992. So I’m cast as a detective, I’m a Lieutenant Colonel in Strike Back, I’ve played a surgeon and a werewolf and I’ve played the Son of the Almighty. How many actors can say that?” laughs Robson.

“I’m not a person who thinks you can solve problems by confiding in an invisible friend. I never have been. But I completely respect and sometimes envy people who have faith. They seem very content and together. Live and let live.

“I knew about the James Runcie novels and read them when I got the role. James said to me, ‘The one thing I want you to do is live in the shadow of death. I want you to remember what World War Two did to these characters.’

“We all know what it is to love someone and how it makes you feel when you lose someone you love. How we deal with that. Or how it is when something traumatic has happened in our lives.

“I think people in the 1950s were still hiding the scars of World War Two. It was only in the 60s when they said they’d never had it so good. It all looks beautiful and it seems joyous. But there’s this underlying insecurity and darkness.”

Robson was delighted to film in the real village of Grantchester.

“The villagers were really welcoming. So lovely, hospitable, kind, caring and understanding. They really warmed to the shoot and we got to play cricket against a local team. I think they will be pleased as both Grantchester and Cambridge look stunning on screen.”

After Grantchester Robson - who turns 50 in December - went on to film a second series of ITV’s Tales From Northumberland and is still travelling the world for both his fishing documentaries and Strike Back.
“I’m looking after myself and I feel great. It’s been one of the busiest years I’ve ever had but in a good way. A great problem to have in what is one of the most insecure industries in the world. Any actor who knows what they’re doing six months ahead, that’s a pretty good place to be in.

“And to be asked to be a part of Grantchester? I’m still the same as when I first started at the age of 20, which was, ‘You want me in your programme? Really? That’s great.’”
'God may have formed Man out of dirt but I won’t stand for it on my lino.'

Housekeeper Mrs Maguire takes no prisoners during her daily rounds in Grantchester.

“She is described in the script as ‘religious and aggressive’. That does my job for me. But Mrs Maguire also has a huge heart underneath it all,” explains Tessa Peake-Jones.

“As housekeeper at the vicarage for clergyman Sidney she comes and goes each day and has been a local probably all her life.

“Sidney (James Norton) is comparatively new. Mrs Maguire has worked in the past with elderly vicars so this is the first time she’s had a young thing to boss about.

“She has a slightly maternal relationship with Sidney, the son she didn’t have. And while she can be bossy, keeping him in his place, deep down she is also very fond of him.

“Mrs Maguire would fight to the death to defend him in the village. But she also thinks she has licence to tell him what she thinks and keep him in order.

“Both of them speak their mind. They’ve got the same sense of humour and neither are frightened of the other. Sidney may be bossed about but he’s not scared of her. And she isn’t of him. That makes for a really interesting relationship.”

Marchlands and Only Fools And Horses star Tessa loved filming in the Cambridgeshire village of Grantchester.
“It’s a beautiful village and the people have been very welcoming. They all seem quite excited about us being here and a number act as the church congregation.

“Walking into a studio is fine but it’s never quite the same thing as being in the actual real house or church. It’s always much nicer filming in a real place rather than a set.

“The 1950s is also a lovely era for a period drama. I love the look of Grantchester. A time some of the audience, of course, will remember. For older viewers it’s their childhood and memories.

“Our story begins in 1953, just eight years after the end of the Second World War. So there are still the ripples of that.”

Sitting on one of the historic pews at the Grantchester Church of St Andrew and St Mary, Tessa is talking in a break between filming Sunday morning church scenes.

“Mrs Maguire has a hat on today because it’s church. But you mainly see her in a nice pinny. She has some very pretty dresses but they’re very simple. And a black funeral outfit because she would know all the people and go to their funerals.

“She hasn’t got a lot of money so you see her wearing the same things over and over again, which I like. It’s authentic. While her hair is classic but more 1930s or 1940s because of her way of being conventional. You carry on with what you know.

“She is quite brisk and no-nonsense. She doesn’t hang around. In all of the scenes where she’s got anything practical to do I try and do it at a great speed. Mrs Maguire would want to get as much done in that hour as she could.

“I loved the scripts. As soon as I read them there was no question of not doing it. Grantchester has a lovely mix of great writing, interesting characters, gorgeous scenery and the murder mystery whodunit, which is always intriguing.

“But the series also has an edge to it. It’s not just chocolate box. It doesn’t back away from things like racism, the Second World War and what it meant to people, alcoholism and other subjects.

“One episode discusses whether a doctor should help elderly people who are dying on their way. A debate we’re having today. It’s a very contentious issue which they addressed back then. You hear both sides of the argument.”

Tessa seized on the role of Mrs Maguire.

“You get to 50 plus and while the parts are there, they can be quite sparse. I’ve always felt that actresses between 50 and 60 have quite a rough time. You’re no longer the mistresses, or the mothers of teenagers, and not quite old enough to be into the character roles.

“Once you get to your 60s you’ve got your grandmothers, nosey neighbours and other characters of that age. So something like a Mrs Maguire is a great character but not elderly. She has a lot of spark to her.

“Sometimes she’s a bit of a busybody and tends to make comments about people to Sidney. She can’t hold her tongue, particularly if she feels somebody is doing something wrong.

“But what I love about the scripts is there’s never too much of her. She’s perfectly timed. She comes in, does these lovely little gems and then disappears again.”
Sidney has brought some fresh ideas to Grantchester.

“He is quite progressive, which for the village, the church and for her is a challenge. She is quite entrenched in conservatism and a conventional way of being.

“Mrs Maguire expresses her views but does think about what this young vicar says and can change her mind. Which is nice to see.

“She would like Sidney to get married but believes heiress Amanda Kendall (Morven Christie) would not be a suitable wife for him.

“She wants somebody who could keep him on the straight and narrow. She feels Amanda is a little out of his grasp because of her class.

“We don’t know what has happened to Mrs Maguire’s husband Ronnie. He went off to fight in the Second World War and hasn’t come back. She only ever says he disappeared for no good reason.

“He could have been missing in action and just gone off somewhere. Or he could have returned and not wanted to come back to her. She never addresses that. So it’s a bit of a mystery.

“She talks of having experience of a rotten apple, being with her husband. But she still has a picture of Ronnie in her locket. Even if you sense maybe he isn’t coming back for a reason, you cling on to the fact you haven’t heard for definite either way.”

In episode two we meet Sidney’s new curate Leonard Finch (Al Weaver).

“Mrs Maguire has got used to being on her own. She likes working at the vicarage because it’s company. When Leonard arrives it’s even better. Someone else to look after. The three of them become this rather odd family looking out for each other.

“It’s a lovely relationship between her and the young and innocent Leonard. She gives him a quilt that is very old but she thinks it will cheer his room up. His reaction is very touching because I don’t think anyone has ever given him a present before.

“She is glad someone else is there to help Sidney because she is worried he is burning the candle at both ends. Mrs Maguire knows he stays up late drinking whisky and trying to sort the world out while also giving everything during the day for his parishioners.”

Tessa enjoyed working with James Norton as Sidney.

“James is a joy and a very good actor. We worked together on a low budget movie a year before filming this. So we had a bit of shorthand, where you know someone and get on very well with them. That makes it much easier to act with them.

“Grantchester has had such a good feel while we’ve been making it and the casting is fantastic. You can immediately tell who everyone is. Really well written by Daisy Coulam.

“I’ve got all my fingers crossed viewers like the series.”
Morven Christie got into the swing of her Grantchester role by plunging into a river.

“I love doing a bit of stunt action but I was wearing a summer dress and it was rather cold,” she laughs.

Morven plays heiress Amanda Kendall whose love for vicar Sidney Chambers (James Norton) must remain as no more than friendship.

The opening scene of the series sees them enjoying a rope swing over the River Cam until it snaps, throwing Amanda into the water.

“We shot that in early April and they had to do it in quite a deep part, so the river was chilly. A stunt double did the actual fall from the rope and then James and I were in the water.

“There was a limit to how long we could be in there because it was only up to around three minutes before I start losing the use of my limbs.

“James was funny. He was in a long-sleeved shirt and trousers with a wet suit underneath and was like, ‘It’s OK.’ And I’m saying, ’I’m seven-and-a-half stone in a summer dress!’

“But it was fine. We had such a fun day. And the second you get out of the water they’re warming you up. The nurse was also there with antiseptic sprays, making me blow my nose and rinse my mouth out.

“There are so many safety features around when you do something like this for TV and it’s the perfect way to open the show.”
It is clear from the start there is a spark between Amanda and Sidney, who have known each other for years.

But this is 1953 and the prospect of her becoming the wife of a vicar is not something her aristocratic father Sir Edward (Pip Torrens) could ever sanction.

From There To Here, Hunted and Twenty Twelve actress Morven explains: “Amanda is the daughter of a very wealthy society father. Her mother died a few years ago and she has two very young brothers.

“She works at the National Gallery in London and so far has managed to avoid marriage. She’s in love with Sidney and he’s in love with her.

“But Amanda has reached a point where she can’t avoid marriage anymore, this being the early 50s. Daddy has wagged his finger and set her up with the son of a friend of his.

“So although Amanda loves Sidney and would like to spend her life with him, or stay single, they’re not options for her.

“Amanda and Sidney are best friends. They’ve known each other a long time because Amanda went to school with Sidney’s sister Jennifer (Fiona Button).

“Sidney was away during World War Two but they met again by chance at the National Gallery and re-kindled their friendship. They are most free and happy in each other’s company.

“1 was very much rooting for them when I first read the scripts. I was really attracted to the sadness in her heart. She’s stuck in a life that doesn’t really suit her and her escape is hanging out with her best friend Sidney.

“But he’s never made a move. I think if he tried she’d certainly take it to her father and do her best, although I don’t know how far she would get.

“It was very different socially then. For someone in Amanda’s position to marry a vicar on a low wage wasn’t on. A different world to today.

“They have both always known this was going to happen. That at some point Amanda’s father would wear her down and she would be married off. Now that day has come.

“Her relationship with husband-to-be Guy (Tom Austen) exists purely on an outer level. They don’t really have anything to talk about.

“Guy will ‘allow’ her to keep working if she still wants to. He’s not who Amanda would choose to spend her life with but he’s better than some of the other options in the past.

“But she feels a sense of responsibility for Sidney. When you really care about someone you don’t want to see them lonely. She is genuinely terrified of being responsible for the person she most cares about being alone and sad.”

Sidney’s housekeeper Mrs Maguire (Tessa Peake-Jones) isn’t afraid of expressing a view.

“Mrs Maguire thinks Sidney should get married but certainly not to a society daughter like Amanda. She doesn’t think she would make an appropriate wife for him.
Amanda skips around in bare feet, swings on trees and doesn’t behave the way a young lady should behave."

Filming took place on location in the real village of Grantchester near Cambridge.

“It’s so beautiful and the church is wonderful. It’s one of those villages that looks like it stopped at this point in time. But they’ve obviously dressed it to take it back to 1953.

“The villagers have also been very welcoming and a lot have been involved as extras.

“There’s something really lovely about watching this early 1950s period on screen. It’s so close to the end of the war and society was just beginning to find its comfort and safety again.

“Visually it’s a rich experience. The sets and costumes are gorgeous. There’s just something about the period that’s warm.

“Working on period dramas is really special. Particularly when you manage to get outside of London to film them. When you’re in period costume, it does a lot of the character work for you. You feel different.

“But sometimes if you’re shooting in London with the normal day-to-day city bustle going on around you, it’s quite odd.

“Here in Cambridgeshire it’s just like we’re in a beautiful 1953 bubble.”

Grantchester is written by Daisy Coulam, adapted from the novel Sidney Chambers and the Shadow of Death by James Runcie.

“I hadn’t come across The Grantchester Mysteries books before this but I read the first novel when I got the role.

“Auditions and scripts tend to come in little pockets. You get four or five at a time. Everything casts and shoots at the same time.

“So I had four or five things on the go when I started reading Grantchester and just went, ‘Oh, what a lovely relief.’ It just had so much love and heart in it.

“That’s why ultimately I went, ‘That’s the one I want to take. This is the character I want to play and this is the project I want to be a part of.’ Because it feels like it’s driven by love with real heart and warmth.

“Also Daisy has written all of the scripts. It’s really unusual for a series to have the same writer write everything. It means she has a responsibility and a real care for every character. I think that’s rare and really special. It’s lovely to be a part of that.

“James has been very good about allowing it to take a life of its own on screen. If you’re going to put your work into anyone’s hands, you’d be very trusting of Daisy Coulam.

“I think viewers will really fall in love with the characters. At the same time it has very gently and cleverly gone into some quite tricky political ground. Grantchester has a real sense of social responsibility to it as well as being beautiful and warm.

“James Norton is brilliant as Sidney. We auditioned together in the final stages, although he had already been cast. It’s almost like alchemy whether your acting matches together or not.
“It was evident very quickly that it was going to work. So much has to be said between the two characters. It’s really important to have an undercurrent and be able to play those moments silently while other things are going on.”

James was on TV as psychopath killer Tommy Lee Royce in BBC1 drama series Happy Valley when Grantchester was being filmed.

“I watched the first episode but then stopped as I couldn’t have the shadow of that while we were filming this. The characters are so different. Grantchester is all about warmth, comfort and safety.

“So watching him play a psychopath was not a good idea for me. But as you’ll see from this, James is a very good actor!”

Amanda has a distinctive 1950s’ style.

“When I start reading a script I often imagine a character or actress in a particular period and for this it was Audrey Hepburn in Roman Holiday. A quite posh girl behaving in ways she shouldn’t behave.

“It turned out that costume design and make-up had also individually gone, ‘Audrey Hepburn.’ So that was the basis for her look with classic 50s’ hair. She wears great stuff but is not as ‘put together’ as a lot of the women in that period.”

Other locations included the steam trains of the Bluebell Railway in Sussex.

“As a child I used to spend a lot of time at Boat of Garten in the Highlands where there is a steam railway. The Bluebell is such a beautiful line with the sound of proper trains.

“We see Amanda at the station travelling back from Cambridge to her flat in London after her weekly visits to see Sidney.”

Morven hopes the series is also on track to become a firm TV favourite.

“Grantchester has been a gift of a job. Working with a really special group of people on a lovely drama. I can’t wait for viewers to see it.”
Al Weaver felt the fear of facing a church congregation from the pulpit when he delivered a sermon as curate Leonard Finch.

“It was terrifying. I’m the worst public speaker in the world but obviously this was acting in character as Leonard.”

James Norton, who plays Grantchester vicar Sidney Chambers, had already faced his flock, including a number of real villagers sat in the pews as supporting artists.

“James had done a few sermons and he said, ‘It’s actually quite nerve-wracking.’ And then everyone kept saying, ‘Good luck.’ I was like, ‘All right, chill out, it’s just a speech.’

“But it is quite daunting standing up there delivering a sermon to all those people. Luckily Leonard is actually nervous himself for his first sermon, thrown in at the deep end.

“Robert De Niro once said, ‘There’s no need to get nervous because you can just do it again.’ But you are under a time pressure and you know you’ve just got three or four takes to nail it. So it’s that time pressure more than anything.”

Leonard arrives in episode two as a prospective curate in the Cambridgeshire village.

“Sidney’s housekeeper Mrs Maguire (Tessa Peake-Jones) is keen for Leonard to help in the parish because she feels Sidney has too heavy a workload.

“Leonard is a well-groomed, buttoned-up, nervous kind of guy. He’s intellectual and tries to mix philosophy with theology - big things about morality and struggling to see what’s right and wrong.
“He is very sweet, has funny moments and is not very good with grey areas. I’m from Bolton and Leonard is also from the north with an accent to match.”

Leonard’s landlady describes him as “homosexual” at a time when being gay was illegal and could lead to prison.

But the young curate is still discovering what he might and might not be.

“He’s not really aware of that. He is a gentle soul and naive. Back in the 1950s people did marry even if they thought they might be gay. They wanted families and being gay was illegal. You would be arrested. He would like to find a companion and I don’t think he is led by sexual desires.

“All he knows is he’s an outsider and has been his whole life. He likes who he is but wants to learn and that’s what he’s in Grantchester to do. And he does start to break out of himself.

“His escape is books. They have been his friend for years. Leonard just wants to help people and became involved with religion and the church to fit in. The philosophy in these books and the church is his way of feeling like he belongs to the world.

“This is his first position as a curate. He was teaching before at a girls’ school and studying theology. Grantchester seems like a very welcoming place for someone wanting to fit it.

“Sidney and Leonard are pretty much polar opposites, apart from both wanting to help people. Sidney is such an open priest and different from the norm, especially in 1953.

“Leonard has been told this and that’s why he comes to Grantchester because there is someone who will accept him and not ask questions. I think everyone has secrets. And Leonard is no different.”

Leonard has a pencil moustache when we first meet him.

“My social life was not great. But it was fine. It works for him. He does like to keep himself pristine, as you can tell from his hair which we call, ‘The Leonard.’

“He doesn’t have a huge range of clothes because people didn’t have back then. Especially priests and curates who would walk around in their suits at all times. Although he does have a really nice dressing gown.”

Al had no problems co-starring with Sidney’s black labrador called Dickens.

“I’ve never worked with a dog before. Dickens eats a lot of sausages. I’ve worked with horses and found out I’m allergic to them. But Dickens was fine.”

Doubts about Leonard’s career path emerge when he faces death for the first time.

“I don’t think he ever thought he would see a dead body. He doesn’t think ahead like that. It’s all very new to him.

“That’s brilliant to play as an actor because Leonard is discovering new things every day. Whether it’s a sermon, finding a dead body or helping the police. He gets roped into things unwillingly and has to constantly question his conscience.”

Grantchester is based on the novels by James Runcie adapted by screenwriter Daisy Coulam.
“Daisy is a wonderful writer. Every character is really rounded. The series has a beautiful heart but also a hardness to it. The way she writes for Leonard is brilliant, a mix of comedy, sweetness and touching moments.

“Grantchester is one of the best scripts I’ve read this year. It’s got the murder mysteries, the period drama, wonderful character, lots of atmosphere and looks amazing.”
SYNOPSES

Episode One

It’s 1953, and just outside the Cambridgeshire village of Grantchester, local vicar Sidney Chambers (James Norton) has lost track of time, having spent a glorious morning with his fun loving friend, and the woman with whom he is secretly in love, Amanda Kendall (Morvern Christie). Racing to church, Sidney arrives just in time to minister at the funeral of a local solicitor - although his poor time-keeping earns the disapproval of his punctilious housekeeper Mrs Maguire (Tessa Peake-Jones).

With the death a suicide, Sidney does his best to comfort young German widow Hildegard Staunton (Pheline Roggan), but is soon called away from his normal duties when the glamorous Pamela Morton (Rachel Shelley) asks to draw Sidney into her confidence. She reveals that she was having an affair with the late solicitor – and that far from being a suicide, she has reasons to believe that he was in fact murdered.

With Pamela unable to go to the police, she asks Sidney if he would be able to look into the matter for her – after all, people confide in vicars, don’t they? However, Sidney’s investigation quickly draws him to the attention of grumpy local DI Geordie Keating (Robson Green), who doesn’t really appreciate the clergyman sticking his nose into things he doesn’t understand. But Sidney isn’t to be shaken off too easily – particularly when he begins to uncover evidence that the suicide was staged.

However, whilst Sidney is focused on getting to the bottom of the alleged murder, his own world is shaken apart when he receives news that Amanda has got engaged – it seems that Sidney has missed his moment. With his heart breaking, and his theory about the murder seemingly coming up short, will Sidney be able to work out who killed the solicitor before the killer strikes again?
Episode Two

Sidney tries and fails to resist when he is pressured by his sister Jen (Fiona Button) into attending Amanda’s engagement dinner – he hates making small talk with the upper classes. Not only that, but he knows that Amanda’s rich and irritingly handsome fiancée Guy (Tom Austen) will be in attendance. As Sidney tries to cope with the evening by sinking one too many drinks, old tensions run high between the school friends of Amanda and Jen. But the evening really erupts when Amanda’s engagement ring goes missing – and Jen’s boyfriend Johnny (Ukweli Roach) is accused of stealing it.

With tensions still simmering, Sidney is called by Geordie in the early morning with terrible news – one of the guests at the dinner party has been found dead, and this time he’s certain it’s murder. With everyone in shock, Sidney carefully assists Geordie in interviewing everyone about the night before – and it becomes clear that the fingers of suspicion are pointing firmly at Johnny. And when evidence comes to light that seems to confirm Johnny as the killer, it would seem that it’s cased closed for Geordie and Sidney.

However, with Sidney believing that Johnny is innocent, he begins to work on a different theory – and also finds that he will need the help of nervous new curate Leonard (Al Weaver) to unmask the true killer. Not only that, but he will also need to find the one thing he would rather stayed lost – Amanda’s missing engagement ring.
CREDITS

Cast

Sidney Chambers ................................................................. James Norton
Geordie Keating ............................................................... Robson Green
Amanda Kendall ............................................................... Morven Christie
Mrs Maguire ................................................................. Tessa Peake-Jones
Leonard Finch ................................................................. Al Weaver
Hildegard Staunton ........................................................... Pheline Roggan
Jennifer Chambers ........................................................... Fiona Button
Johnny Johnson .............................................................. Ukweli Roach
Guy Hopkins ................................................................. Tom Austen
Sir Edward Kendall ......................................................... Pip Torrens
Cathy Keating ............................................................... Kacey Ainsworth
Pamela Morton .............................................................. Rachel Shelley
Annabel Morrison ........................................................... Michelle Duncan
Clive ....................................................................... Andrew Woodall
Stephen ................................................................. Eoin McCarthy
Mr Brant ................................................................. Chris Bearne
Annie ................................................................. Sia Berkeley
Daphne ................................................................. Pippa Nixon
William ................................................................. Harry Hadden-Paton
Lilian Thompson .......................................................... Carolina Main
Esme ................................................................. Skye DeGruttola
Alexander Kendall ........................................................ Leon Rolfe
Henry Kendall .......................................................... Lukas Rolfe
Edna ................................................................. Beth Lilly
Isabel ................................................................. Lucy Black
Arthur Evans ............................................................. Kieran O’Brien
Daisy ................................................................. Jean Marsh
Gladys ................................................................. Isla Blair
Doctor Robinson .......................................................... Mark Bonnar
Nurse ................................................................. Josie Bloom
Mr Fielding .............................................................. Hugh Dickson
Derek ................................................................. Michael Simkins
Jack ................................................................. Nick Brimble
Atkins ................................................................. Joe Claflin
Tobias ............................................................ Struan Rodger
Dominic Taylor ........................................................ Lee Williams
Marion ............................................................. Flora Montgomery
Ben ............................................................... Rory Fleck-Byrne
Vic ................................................................. Wayne Foskett
Martha ........................................................... Flora Nicholson
Lucy ............................................................... Samantha White
Alan Mitchell ........................................................ Simon Lawson
Loader Sandy ............................................................. Gregg Lowe
Soldier George .......................................................... Frankie Wilson
Driver Tam ........................................................... Brian Vernel
Gunner Val ........................................................... Mike Noble
Archie ............................................................. Peter Egan
Justin ................................................................. Ted Reilly
Gloria Dee .......................................................... Camilla Marie Beeput
Tommy ................................................................. Andy Beckwith
Robert Miller ......................................................... Paul Hilton
Claudette ............................................................... Natasha Cottriall
Williams ............................................................... Nick Sidi
Walter ................................................................. Nakay Kpaka
James ................................................................. Adam James
Archdeacon ............................................................ Geoff McGivern
Benson ................................................................. David Troughton
PC Daniel Walker .................................................... Thomas Christian

Production Credits

Executive Producer for LOVELY DAY ........................................ Diederick Santer
Executive Producer for MASTERPIECE ..................................... Rebecca Eaton
Producer ........................................................................... Emma Kingsman-Lloyd
Directors ........................................................................... Harry Bradbeer, Jill Robertson and Tim Fywell
Line Producer .................................................................. David Mason
Script Editor ....................................................................... Steve Searle
Production Designer .......................................................... Paul Cross
Make-Up Designer ................................................................ Anne Oldham
Costume Designer ............................................................. Emma Fryer
Editors .............................................................................. Crispin Green, Ulrike Munch and Mary Finlay
Casting Directors ............................................................. Kelly Valentine Hendry, Victor Jenkins and Vicki Thomson
Location Manager ............................................................. Jethro Ensor
Sidney Chambers, the Vicar of Grantchester, is a thirty-two year old bachelor. Sidney is an unconventional clergyman and can go where the police cannot.

Together with his roguish friend Inspector Geordie Keating, Sidney inquires into the suspect suicide of a Cambridge solicitor, a scandalous jewellery theft at a New Year's Eve dinner party, the unexplained death of a well-known jazz promoter and a shocking art forgery, the disclosure of which puts a close friend in danger. Sidney discovers that being a detective, like being a clergyman, means that you are never off duty...

**Praise for ‘The Grantchester Mysteries’ series**

‘Chambers turns out to be a winning clergyman-sleuth, and Runcie’s literary authority is repeatedly demonstrated in the construction of his elegant tales ... there is no denying the winning charm of these artfully fashioned mysteries’ *Independent*

‘Runcie is emerging as Grantchester’s answer to Alexander McCall Smith … The book brings a dollop of *Midsomer Murders* to the Church of England, together with a literate charm of its own: civilized entertainment, with dog-collars’ *Spectator*

‘The clerical milieu is well rendered as an affectionate eye is cast over post-war England - a perfect accompaniment to a sunny afternoon, a hammock and a glass of Pimm’s’ *Guardian*


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