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Acclaimed British actresses Francesca Annis and Samantha Bond lead an impressive ensemble cast in new six-part drama Home Fires for ITV.

The cast also includes, Ruth Gemmell (*Utopia*), Mark Bonnar (*Line of Duty*), Claire Rushbrook (*Collision*), Mark Bazeley (*The Suspicions of Mr Whicher*), Frances Grey (*The Widower*) and Ed Stoppard (*Cilla*).

The drama follows a group of inspirational women in a rural Cheshire community with the shadow of World War II casting a dark cloud over their lives. The isolated village couldn’t feel further away from the impending bloodshed and battlefields and yet it is not immune from the effects of war. As the conflict takes hold, and separates the women from their husbands, fathers, sons and brothers, the characters find themselves under increasing and extraordinary pressures in a rapidly fragmenting world.

By banding together as the Great Paxford Women’s Institute, they help maintain the nation’s fabric in its darkest hour, and discover inner resources that will change their lives forever.

Created and written by Simon Block (*The Eichmann Show, The Shooting of Thomas Hurndall, A.D.*) with episodes co-written by Mark Burt (*Coronation Street, The Dumping Ground*), and Tina Pepler (*Downton Abbey, Princes in the Tower*), Home Fires is produced by the ITV Studios department overseen by Francis Hopkinson (*Wallander, Lucan, Chasing Shadows*). The drama has been developed by Catherine Oldfield (*Collision, Fingersmith, Foyle’s War*) who executive produces alongside Francis. Sue de Beauvoir (*Shetland, Strike Back*) has produced episodes 1-3 and Jeremy Gwilt (*Foyle’s War, Undeniable*) episodes 4-6.

Home Fires is inspired by the non-fiction book ‘Jambusters’ written by Julie Summers, who is delighted she has secured an Alfred Hitchcock style role in the drama.

“I am thrilled to be appearing in a cameo role as a WI county organiser,” said Julie. “My grandmother, a life-long WI member, would undoubtedly approve of me wearing a hat.”
The series has been commissioned for ITV by Director of Drama Steve November and Controller of Drama Victoria Fea.

“We’re really delighted to have commissioned Home Fires,” said Steve November. “Great writing from Simon has given Julie Summers' wonderful book a fictional life. The women are real and engaging and have fantastic spirit and attitude. With World War II on the horizon, multiple strands of plot interweave to create a period drama full of jeopardy and intrigue, but also great humanity and modernity,” added Steve.

Executive Producer Francis Hopkinson commented: "Thanks to Simon Block’s brilliant script, inspired by Julie Summers' book, this series takes a fresh look at life on the Home Front, showing both the tragedies and the triumphs, and offering some wonderful roles for Britain's top actresses. We are delighted that ITV share our enthusiasm for the project."

Episodes 1-3 have been directed by Bruce Goodison (Our World War, My Murder, 10 Days to War) with Robert Quinn (Death in Paradise, Primeval) directing the final three episodes of the series.

The drama also features Rachel Hurd-Wood (Return of Sherlock Holmes), Leila Mimmack (Law & Order: UK), Claire Price (Doctors), Daniel Ryan (Mount Pleasant), Will Attenborough (Utopia), Clare Calbraith (Vera), Chris Coghill (The Driver), Brian Fletcher (The Passing Bells), Fenella Woolgar (Case Histories), Leanne Best (Lucan), Mike Noble (The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time), Jacqueline Pilton (The Royal), Mark Umbers (Eternal Law), Jodie Hamblet (My Mad Fat Diary 2), Adam Long (Happy Valley), Paul Barnhill (Foyle’s War), Anthony Calf (Upstairs Downstairs), Nicola Sloane (Dancing on the Edge), Jim Whelan and Daisy Badger.
THE CHARACTERS

Frances Barden played by Samantha Bond
Married to Peter, sister to Sarah Collingborne
For many years Frances has been the heart and soul of the village’s WI, but never its brain. Not because she isn’t intelligent. She is, formidably, but she has an unfortunate totalitarian streak that can’t help but dominate any forum. As a consequence she hasn’t been allowed near a seat on the Committee. She is a great woman to have in your corner, but a terrible opponent, as she can’t stop until her view has either browbeaten all others into submission, or cleared the room.

But in this new era when Frances insists something be done her way it is put to the vote, and she has no choice but to abide by the result. This is infuriating for Frances, but she gets a tremendous amount out of belonging to the WI and is prepared to put up with the “misguided” will of the majority in order to remain a part of things. Frances has both loyalty and honesty in abundance and these are principles she values in other people.

Frances met her husband at university, and they have been together ever since. Frances’ confidence is rooted in the stability of her very happy marriage as they are devoted to each other. She admires his enterprise and drive, while he admires her absence of doubt, her open-ness, and her capacity for getting things done. Though they tried for many years, they have been unable to have children, and so Frances and Peter have created a substitute family-of-sorts of their own in Cookie and Thumbs (housekeeper and gardener respectively) and later Claire

Sarah Collingborne played by Ruth Gemmell
Married to Adam, sister to Frances Barden
Sarah is two years younger than her sister, Frances, and married to the village vicar. Gentle, insightful, intelligent, and a fantastic listener, she couldn’t be more different
from her sister. Sarah loves Frances dearly whilst realising Frances is not an easy character. Sarah spends much of her time in and out of the WI smoothing over waters churned up by her sister.

Her husband Adam is ten years older than her and saw action in WWI as a regimental chaplain — he was decorated for bravery but came back a broken man after the atrocities he witnessed on the battlefield. He and Sarah met at the end of the war, and it was Sarah who put him back together and nursed him through psychological trauma. Despite their strong relationship, Sarah sometimes struggles to play the role of ‘vicar’s wife’ as she is not a strong believer in God, and finds the requisite ‘saintliness’ for dealing with parishioners occasionally difficult.

Within the WI, Sarah is immensely liked and respected, both in her own right and for the influence she’s able to exercise over older sister Frances. Sarah enjoys learning new skills in this environment, but most of all she enjoys the company of the other women, understanding that in the forthcoming war they will need one another’s support like never before.

Pat Simms played by Claire Rushbrook
Married to Bob
Pat is one of those women who take up the slack left either by those who aren’t pulling their weight, or by the absence of enough people to take on tasks.

Through her friendship with the other women in Great Paxford, and the new WI, Pat is encouraged to push the boundaries of what she’s able to achieve, and becomes much more self-assured — a confidence that sadly doesn’t extend to her home life.

Pat’s husband Bob is very opinionated. A sometime novelist (first book a bestseller…nothing doing since) Bob now has to earn his living as a stringer for newspapers. As a consequence, Bob is bitter and hugely frustrated, and he takes these frustrations out on Pat to an increasing extent across the series (until the women step in to stop him). As far as Bob is concerned, Pat’s sole purpose is to stay at home and look after him, and he doesn’t like anything to distract her from that role, especially her involvement with the WI. As long as Pat does his bidding they rub along in an unhappy but stable fashion. Bob thrives on the control that he holds over Pat, and has no qualms in using psychological abuse.

For her part, Pat is unstintingly loyal and would be mortified if anyone outside the
house learned the truth about her marriage. The WI provides an invaluable respite for Pat away from Bob’s tyranny, but as she grows in confidence with the support of her empowered friends, Bob becomes increasingly determined to crush her spirit.

**Erica Campbell played by Frances Grey**  
**Married to Will, mother to Kate and Laura**

Erica is neat, wry, and quiet, and runs the village surgery for her husband Will, the local GP. Erica is also the surgery’s dispenser and is often to be found making up the pills, medicines and tonics prescribed by Will for his patients.

She and Will had a whirlwind romance and married in haste in 1918 when Will was back on leave from the front, but the agonising and uncertain wait for his return at the end of the war is not something she wants for her daughters, Laura (18) and Kate (19). Family is the most important thing in Erica’s life, and she will fight fiercely to protect them, no matter what the circumstances.

The war will come into their lives like a bomb but Erica is able to wrestle some perspective onto these terrible events. It helps that she has an unshakeable sense of optimism and the benefit of hindsight that living through the Great War brings. She also has a deep-rooted sense of right and wrong.

At the WI, Erica can always be counted upon to do what’s required without supervision or argument (unlike some members). She may not be leadership material but she’s bloody good follower material. And while Erica has an aversion to stepping into any limelight, her intelligence and dry humour allows her to cast a gimlet eye on most things, and pass accurate and piercing comment on pomposity without seeming unduly unkind.

Attitude is everything for Erica, as it dictates how to approach and get the most out of her life. Her approach is calm, cautious and practical at all times, never one to succumb to hysteria or fear. Her rational attitude towards life and perspective towards its events are what keep her on an even keel – and what makes her such an important friend to other women. But her attitude towards life’s trivialities is significantly challenged by wartime, as the stakes for everyone are ramped up.
**Miriam Brinsley played by Claire Price**

**Married to Bryn, mother to David**

Miriam is the wife of the village butcher, Bryn, and used to the good life. Originally hailing from the Ceiriog valley in north Wales, Miriam grew up on a prosperous sheep farm and is country born and bred.

Immense practicality and a distinct lack of squeamishness make her perfectly suited to being a butcher’s wife; she and Bryn have a solid partnership based on trust and years of shared experiences.

Miriam married Bryn when she was just 19, and they have one son, David, aged 16, the apple of his mother’s eye – since David had a near fatal asthma attack when he was a baby, Miriam has been on permanent protective alert, determined to shield her son from any harm. When war is declared Miriam battles with a mortal dread of David being killed if he goes off to war – she has no hesitation in trying to prevent him from going by any means possible, even though David himself is desperate to sign up and defend his country.

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**Alison Scotlock played by Fenella Woolgar**

Alison has been a widow since 1916 after her George died in the Great War. Alison has remained alone ever since. Instead, she has settled into a happy enough existence alone with a dog and her books, remaining somewhat of an outside in the village. Alison is an avid reader and reads extremely widely. What little money she has (her income is very modest) is spent on books.

Alison lives, and works, in a small cottage on the edge of the village. New schoolteacher Teresa will move in with her, after the school cottage is requisitioned for use by the military. Unused to sharing her private space with anyone except Boris, the dog, Alison will eventually come to value the company that Teresa offers. The two become firm friends and confidantes.
Alison is a bookkeeper by trade, and treasured by small businesses all over the region, who entrust her with their accounts. Alison is the natural choice of Treasurer for the WI, and keeps the books as meticulously as she keeps her clients’ accounts in check.

Alison is devoted to her dog, Boris the Great, and never leaves home without him. Anywhere Boris isn’t welcome Alison doesn’t want to be. Of course, they are both very welcome at the WI, which is a moment of respite from her solitary life.

Steph Farrow played Clare Calbraith
Married to Stanley, mother to Little Stan

Outwardly, Steph looks like a traditional farmer’s wife because that’s exactly what she is. She can do everything on their farm that her husband, Stanley, can do. Steph is as strong as an ox, and rules the farm and her family with the same brusque, no-nonsense manner. Steph and Stan have a son, Little Stan, aged 14.

For much of her life Steph dresses and acts like a man, living at home on the farm in the company of men. The idea of joining a woman-only organisation such as the WI hasn’t really occurred to her. While she has been aware of the WI’s existence, Steph has always considered it belonged to an alien stratum of society that doesn’t include women like her. But in fact, the WI exists for exactly people like Steph. When a new incarnation of the WI arises, Frances prioritises what she considers has been the great weakness of the previous incarnation - its failure to attract women from a properly diverse range of backgrounds.

The WI allows Steph to express a different side of herself. For a woman who lives among men and livestock, this is the first time Steph discovers friendship and support from other women and she finds it hugely liberating. Her fellow WI members also benefit from Steph’s no-nonsense and proactive approach as she offers a fresh perspective on their world. Her knowledge of farming and food production will prove invaluable as rationing takes hold and the village is forced to adapt and increasingly fend for itself.
**Teresa Fenchurch played by Leanne Best**
Teresa is a devoted primary school teacher. She’s just the sort of smart, forward-looking woman that school governor, Sarah, is delighted to have secured for the school. She is very bright and brilliant with the children, determined to help them come to terms with the new, difficult, and potentially frightening circumstances that may come with the war.

Teresa, who has never lived in the countryside before, is impressed by the can-do spirit of the WI and quickly joins up. She finds herself having to move in with the solitary Alison, but after an initial awkwardness, as Alison adjusts to having another person in her life, the two women soon become close companions – Alison is a valuable ally to Teresa in the village.

Teresa becomes an invaluable member of the WI, and values the camaraderie of the village women. She soon begins to thrive on her new life in the country.

However, there’s more to Teresa’s sudden arrival in the village than meets the eye, and she lives in constant fear of a secret past being discovered, knowing that if it emerges her reputation in the village, and the career she loves so much, could be ruined forever. She is determined not to wreck her chances of happiness in her new life.

**Joyce Cameron played by Francesca Annis**
Married to local magistrate, ex WI president
Joyce isn’t a horrible person – horrible people never think they’re anything other than reasonable and often consider themselves merely better acquainted with the realities of life than other people. Joyce likes to be in charge of everything because she likes to be in control and she truly believes she knows best and others are misguided. She is on the committee or board of every village and area body and the war offers her further scope to extend her influence as committees spring up to oversee everything from salvage to requisitioning.

Joyce believes wholeheartedly in the stability of social hierarchy. Some might say, and some quite often do, that she is a first class snob. They might be right but Joyce has no reason to feel herself superior to anyone – if you dig into her history you’d find some pretty shady information about where she came from and who her family are.

But no one can deny that Joyce gets things done. Frances, who takes over the leadership of the WI and becomes the thorn in Joyce’s side, will come to realise that while Joyce’s methods might not be admired, her ability to focus and drive a project forward to a successful outcome is a skill that not many people have, and one that in war time the village most desperately needs.

If Joyce were a little less bothered by improving everyone else and a little more concerned with herself, she would realise that she is lonely. All her goodly community works are a diversionary tactic – without them she’d be at home, bored out of her mind and forced to consider where her life went so wrong. Her family life is a joyless one. Her husband, a magistrate and local councillor, works all hours and her estranged son lives in Canada with little contact with his mother.

However, Joyce will need to relax her limpet like grip on the old order and embrace the new if she is to be at the forefront of this brave, new, women-led world. But will she?

Claire Hillman played by Daisy Badger
After the death of her aunt (her only living relative), Claire was forced to look for employment in order to survive, and she ended up in the village working as a housemaid for Joyce Cameron. Although she is an active and enthusiastic member of the WI, Claire has always been under Joyce’s influence, until she defiantly goes against her. In the new progressive version of the WI, she is encouraged to be more independent of mind, although still finds herself easily influenced by those people she perceives as more important than her.
Claire is generously openhearted, makes friends easily and is unstintingly loyal. Sometimes she’s taken advantage of by those who should know better, and Claire will get caught in the middle of Joyce and Frances’ political power play.

Claire doesn’t do anything by halves, so when she falls for the village postman Spencer Wilson, she falls headlong. However, the course of true love never did run smooth, and Claire soon discovers that not everyone is as honest and straightforward as she is. Naïve she may be, but Claire isn’t one to give up on love that easily, and decides to take matters into her own hands. Amongst all the characters, it’s Claire that is perhaps most influenced by the WI – it’s from that community of women that she finds strength and purpose to pursue what she wants.

**Kate Campbell played by Rachel Hurd-Wood**

**Daughter to Will and Erica, elder sister to Laura**

Practical, charming and pretty in an unassuming way, Kate adopts a ‘gung ho’ approach to most things. Much to the bursting pride of Will and Erica, she has a place to read medicine at university in London, although the confusion of war has put this on hold for the moment, and in the meantime she’s perfectly content to stay at home with her parents. Although Erica would never admit to having a favourite daughter, she and Kate have always been more similar in their personalities and outlook on life.

Kate is less interested in men than her sister, Laura, but when handsome RAF pilot Jack arrives something clicks inside her and a wilder side emerges. He’s the absolute love of her life, and the normally sensible Kate is reckless in her uninhibited passion for him.
**Laura Campbell played by Leila Mimmack**

**Daughter to Will and Erica, younger sister to Kate**

Laura is bright, impetuous and lacking in the requisite maturity to deal with some of the situations she gets herself into. She loves her sister, but has always been slightly envious of her effortless charm and tact. She truly believes her parents consider Kate the ‘successful daughter’, but in reality (although he would never admit it), Will feels more of an affinity with Laura than with Kate.

When Kate begins her love affair with Jack, Laura feels like she’s being left behind whilst her sister moves forward in her life. This isn’t true – Laura will have adventures of her own in time, but she doesn’t see it that way.

As far as Laura is concerned, the war is something that only affects her when groups of handsome soldiers and RAF officers pass through the village.

**Isobel Reilly played by Gillian Dean**

**Comes to live with the Bardens, brother worked at Peter’s factory**

Blind since birth and brought up in a bustling city, Isobel has spent her whole life under a strict set of rules about what she can and cannot do, which has left her frustrated and unable to enjoy new experiences. She is surprised and delighted when Frances invites her to stay in the village after an initial mix up, and relishes the sudden freedom she’s offered in this new environment.

Under the guidance of Steph and Frances, she is encouraged to explore opportunities now available to her including paid work on Steph’s farm (the first money she’s ever earned). The women admire her quiet confidence and resilience, and some realize that they may be able to learn as much from her as she from them.
Bob Simms played by Mark Bazeley
Married to Pat
A journalist by trade, Bob’s first book was a best-selling fictionalised account of his experience in WW1. But he’s achieved little since then, and it’s steadily eaten away at him. He now earns his living as a stringer for whichever paper will hire him, while trying to crack that elusive second success as a novelist in his spare time. As a consequence, Bob is somewhat bitter and deeply frustrated, and he vents both in his relationship with Pat.

As for so many men of his generation, the devastating effects of the war took their toll on young Bob. The atrocities, the chaos, the destruction, the tremendous fear and almost unfathomable loss of life left Bob with a pathological desire for order and control. This expresses itself as something deeply damaging by the time the Second World War approaches.

After twenty years of marriage Bob’s needs have deepened, darkened, and atrophied, and express themselves as a mesh of control and abuse in which Pat finds herself almost entirely trapped with the WI as her only escape.

For Bob, Pat exists to stay at home and look after him. He doesn’t like anything to distract her from that role, including her involvement with the W.I. As long as Pat does Bob’s bidding they rub along in an uneasy but stable fashion.

Reverend Adam Collingborne played by Mark Bonnar
Married to Sarah
Adam is Great Paxford’s vicar. He knows and is appreciated by all his parishioners, and he feels a pastoral responsibility towards each one. Adam found his calling early in life and his faith has never faltered, despite atrocities witnessed during WW1. His sense of duty and passion for his work drive him forward, embracing believers and non-believers alike.

Adam served as a regimental chaplain in WW1, decorated for bravery at the Somme. He was a symbol of hope and home for soldiers on the battlefield, but returned home with his nerves shattered. Sarah nursed him back to mental health. Sarah shares Adam’s calm and rational perspective on life, which makes them well suited, despite her agnosticism.
When war breaks out, Adam wrestles with his conscience – he knows Sarah won’t want him to re-enlist, but Adam’s sense of vocation is a severe taskmaster. He knows what awaits the young soldiers of the village, and feels strongly he must accompany and support them in the dark days ahead.

**Dr. Will Campbell played by Ed Stoppard**
**Married to Erica, father to Kate and Laura**
Dr. Will knows his patients inside out and understands the importance of forging relationships, and building trust between patient and doctor. After the horrors witnessed in 1914-18, he’s more than happy to provide care and comfort to this small Cheshire village and he is greatly respected.

Will and Erica had a whirlwind romance and married in haste in 1918, when Will was back from leave from the front. Their marriage is based on honesty and trust, and they make a fantastic team in the doctor’s practice. Will shares his wife’s pragmatic approach to life, but when he gets some devastating news he becomes more impulsive, determined to live each day to the full.

**Bryn Brinsley played by Daniel Ryan**
**Married to Miriam, father to David**
Miriam and Bryn met and married when they were both just 19 – Miriam was the daughter of the prosperous sheep farmer who supplied meat to Bryn’s father’s butchers. Bryn’s charm and humour instantly attracted him to Miriam, and they got married despite the disapproval of Miriam’s parents, who hoped for someone slightly ‘better’.
With Miriam by his side, Bryn took over the family business and it quickly became one of the most popular and well-run shops in Great Paxford. He and Miriam have a solid partnership based on years of shared experiences.

They have one son, David, aged 16. Bryn is immensely proud of his son. While Bryn is not naïve enough to ignore the possible dangers awaiting David during war, he remembers his own war years as ones full of camaraderie and the desire to fight for one’s country. He understands Miriam’s opposition and tries to ease the parting by asking David to wait until he’s called up.

Stanley Farrow played by Chris Coghill  
Husband of Steph, father of Little Stan  
Stan is a farmer who has never known any other life. For him, fulfillment is a successful calving at 5am, or a hard-won bargain for a new pig at market. His remaining regret is that he’s never been able to buy his own farm – he and Steph are tenant farmers who rely on the renewal of their lease.

Together, they run the farm in the same efficient and no-nonsense way they approach most aspects of their lives. While neither are prone to overt displays of affection, Steph and Stan have a secure and happy marriage. They are completely equal who know one another absolutely.

Stan was too young to join up in WW1, and isn’t expected to enlist in this war since farming is a reserved occupation that exempts him from military service. Stan understands the importance of his work in keeping the country and soldiers fed. However, for the first time in his life he yearns for something more than being on the farm – he is desperate to participate in the defining event of his generation. As other men begin to enlist, Stan’s dilemma grows – how can he reconcile his desire to fight with leaving his family? And what will have happened to his family and farm if he goes?
Spencer Wilson played by Mike Noble
Spencer is an attractive young man and an expert flirt. His job as the local postman provides ample occasion to cycle around the village and he enjoys this immensely as he possesses a certain charm many respond to. Meeting Claire is a breath of fresh air for Spencer – she’s honest, open, direct, and has a quality that is unlike other girls in the village.

Spencer has a secret he can’t share with anyone – including Claire. When war breaks out, his secret is revealed, and Spencer must wrestle with his conscience as he makes one of the most difficult decisions of his life. Will it turn Claire away from him?

Nick Lucas played by Mark Umbers
Squadron Leader Nick Lucas has outstanding leadership abilities.

He was the first in his family to enter the military and his main objective for joining the RAF was his love of flying rather than a desire to fight.

Despite several opportunities, Nick never married. He loves the company of women but he holds onto the old-fashioned view that there is one person out there for everyone, and he hasn’t yet found her. Great Paxford may prove to be his happy hunting ground in both his professional and personal life, though not necessarily in ways he might expect or control...
SAMANTHA BOND IS FRANCES BARDENSamantha Bond did not relish having to fire a gun during filming of Home Fires.

“I’m terrified of them. Very frightened,” says the actress whose acting CV includes Lady Rosamund in Downton Abbey and Miss Moneypenny in four James Bond films.

“I’ve used hand guns on stage a couple of times and I did a series called NCS Manhunt with David Suchet which involved a lot of gun action - and I hated doing the scenes involving guns.”

“But for some reason it all seemed a lot calmer in Home Fires, set at a time when women feared they might be the last line of defense in the event of a Nazi invasion.”

Samantha plays Frances Barden, an active member of the Great Paxford Women’s Institute who challenges the established order of things.

With husband Peter (Anthony Calf) away running a Liverpool factory, her household includes gardener Thumbs (Jim Whelan) and his wife Cookie (Jacqueline Pilton).

“Frances is the person who would be at the front door holding the gun if the Germans invaded. It’s all very real to her.”

Which is why she and younger sister Sarah (Ruth Gemmell) take part in rifle practice, aiming at an unfortunate scarecrow in a field.

“The village is near an air base and Liverpool is nearby, a major port and a target for the Germans. So you begin thinking you’re living in this little rural idyll but that’s not the case.

“We filmed at a church in one of the Cheshire villages. One side had stained glass windows and the other side had plain glass - because a bomb fell on it.

“When people think of bombing during the Second World War they tend to concentrate on big cities. But these small villages could also find themselves in the firing line.”

As the series opens in 1939, Joyce Cameron (Francesca Annis) is the long-standing President - chairwoman - of the Great Paxford’s Women’s Institute.

“At that time the ‘lady of the manor’ would traditionally be the chair. But Frances thinks there’s been a slight snobbishness to the way Joyce has chaired and feels the WI could be socially more embracing.

“Frances is very outspoken and driven. And sometimes she drives across people. It’s always with the best intentions. She doesn’t think she’s going to upset people when she has a really good idea.

“So Frances acts before she thinks and she challenges Joyce, almost without meaning to. There’s a definite headstrong quality to her.
“Frances will have been aware that war was going to happen, because of her husband’s job manufacturing uniforms for the troops, and she feels Joyce needs to be more flexible and open to the wider community.”

The work of the WI during World War Two is acknowledged as having made a huge and widespread contribution to the nation.

“When I got a phone call from my agent saying they were going to make a series about the Women’s Institute based on a book called Jambusters, there was a bit of my heart that fell.

“I’ve been very vocal about the lack of parts for middle aged ladies and then I thought, ‘They’re going to have us make jam.’ Then I read the first two scripts and I was absolutely captivated.

“I hadn’t realised the importance of the Women’s Institute during the war and the huge difference they made in all sorts of ways via a national network.

“There’s an amazing moment early in the series when Frances is trying to galvanise them into the jam making. Because if we can produce at home then we can help save lives in the Merchant Navy, who won’t have to transport so much food.”

Samantha was among cast members who spent a day picking blackberries. “It was a wonderful summer’s day and we did a lot of singing.

“But there’s far more to the WI in this period than just jam making. The vision was much bigger than it might seem at first.

“The WI was the contact the government used for evacuees because they were the people who knew which house could accommodate how many people.”

1939 was just 21 years after the end of the First World War in 1918.

“It’s important to realise these women would have lived through that first war and that on the village war memorial are the names of the dead who we knew and loved.

“Those of a certain age in Great Paxford have an absolutely vivid memory of that time and know what war is. Many of the men will also have served before. This generation is completely aware of the realities.”

One local in the village declares himself to be a conscientious objector.

“It must be incredibly hard for a village to imagine there is a young man who is not going to fight. Particularly for mothers whose own sons have gone. It’s a very emotional issue.

“What I wasn’t aware of is that conscientious objectors were then given very difficult jobs to do. A lot of them, for example, worked in the fire service. So if Liverpool is being blitzed, you found yourself on the front line at home. They certainly didn’t get an easy ride.”

Samantha enjoyed working with a large female cast.
“It’s glorious,” she smiles. “There’s eight or nine leading female protagonists with most of them over 40. And you’re going, ‘Yes! Bring it on.’

“We all got on very well and had a blast. Highly intelligent women and a lot of laughter. The difference between male and female relationships is that women don’t bother with small talk for very long. So you cut to the nitty gritty of people’s private lives really quite fast.

“It’s been a huge bonding. Then when we come back together after having been away for a while it’s one big reunion, which is heaven. They’re all gorgeous.”

Frances and her younger sister Sarah have lived in the village for all of their lives.

“They’re very close. Sarah tries to keep a check on Frances. So that when Frances is careering headlong towards something, Sarah is holding tightly on to the reins to try and see if she can avoid the collision that’s about to happen. Sometimes she’s successful. Sometimes she isn’t.”

Cast members look the part in a series of period outfits, many of them originals.

“The costumes are stunning. Absolutely extraordinary. Everyone looks real. Although you have to breathe in quite a lot because people were smaller then than today. A lot of the clothes you would wear now. Amazing jackets and fabrics.”

The real life Cheshire village of Bunbury is among the locations used for Great Paxford.

“The villagers have been wonderful to us and some have been extras.

“Every location you walk into is an immediate indication of who lives there. They are all different and a reflection of the characters who live in them. It’s just another aspect of the production that has been done brilliantly.

“I hope viewers will see Home Fires as a really gripping drama telling various personal stories. It shows what goes on behind closed doors with elements of discovery and intrigue.”
“I thought it was amazing there was a TV drama with so many women in it and such female camaraderie.

“There have been a lot of laughs during filming. Men are very anecdotal. They tell stories and that’s lovely. But women are much more personal and subjective.

“And there’s been no mention of football. No-one coming in and having a breakdown because Manchester City lost.”

Cranford and Wives and Daughters star Francesca Annis plays Joyce Cameron, who at the outset of Home Fires is President of the Great Paxford Women’s Institute.

“Joyce is the magistrate’s wife and so is very much the establishment figure in the village. People were in awe of someone like that because they were so very powerful,” explains Francesca.

“Back in the 1930s they could influence employment and decide whether someone could work in a particular place. Very different to today.

“Joyce is old fashioned. Old conservatism. That’s what Joyce represents and what others want to change. Frances (Samantha Bond) wants to go one way and Joyce wants to go another way.

“Home Fires is about the changing face of the Women’s Institute at the start of the Second World War and my job is to represent the old guard. Before this time the WI was very much for upper middle class women who didn’t work.

“The advent of war meant there was a huge change in the role of women. Frances wants a new socialist, democratic change involving everyone. Which, as we now know with hindsight, was very necessary because then women were running the Home Front.

“What I find very interesting is how people, not only women, adapt and how they were suddenly very quickly confronted with change and having to see how they could pull themselves together without long training or anything we’re familiar with now. That must have been absolutely extraordinary.

“We take travel and mobility for granted today but there was a great difference between the urban and rural experience at that time. Then during the war you had women and children evacuated from the cities to the country and a whole new experience.”

Joyce and Frances appear to be direct opposites at the start of the series. But do they have more in common than they think?

“Frances comes to value some aspects of Joyce. Leadership can’t be easy and you can’t be liked all of the time. You’ve got to have the courage to stand your ground and believe in your values.
“I understand where Joyce is coming from. I certainly don’t agree with everything she says and that’s fine. But you have to like aspects of your character or you couldn’t do it.

“I’m not that keen on confrontation in real life. I’m also not in a position where I have to stand up and be counted publicly. But, of course, I’ve got my own values and today it’s so easy because there are so many varied ways of living that are completely acceptable.”

Having to seek refuge in an underground air raid shelter reveals Joyce’s claustrophobia.

“It shows her vulnerability in a way you don’t see in the rest of the series when she’s always being a bit bossy. She has phobias but at the same time has the British stiff upper lip and doesn’t want to wear her feelings on her sleeve until she’s overwhelmed. Joyce needs the help of others to get through.”

Joyce steps in to defend a young man in the village who refuses to fight in the war.

“She’s very patriotic so a conscientious objector is a complete anathema to her. At the same time Joyce is a very just person. She really does represent old British values. So when he has his back turned and is being jeered, she thinks that’s a cowardly thing for them to do. What does that say about you?”

Many of Joyce’s outfits are originals from the 1930s.

“It’s incredible how beautiful the clothes were. Imaginative and different in detail that we don’t have now because everything is mass produced. A lot of people actually made their own clothes - which I used to do. I would buy furnishing material and then make things out of that.

“So you have much more of a sense of individuality and you see that in a lot of the costumes. It’s also amazing to think how long they have lasted.

“Of course it all helps you get into your character, along with your imagination. It would also have been pretty cold at times. I filmed a scene at the village butcher’s shop when we were all standing chatting and I thought to myself, ‘You would be pretty chilly standing here.’ We’re so used to central heating now.”

Joyce shuns the WI jam making in the drama. Has London-based Francesca ever made any?

“I have. When I lived in the Cotswolds I used to make jam and bread and all those things. Blueberry jam was my favourite and I still make home made bread.”

She adds: “I’m very proud to be part of a series about women and how their role developed in the Second World War. It was an extraordinary time.”
Rain is lashing down outside as Ed Stoppard sits in the vast cellar of Cholmondeley Castle in Cheshire.

“It’s bigger than my house. The largest cellar I’ve ever seen in my life,” smiles the actor who has a coughing fit on cue every time the camera rolls.

“I have to admit I thought I would be in worse shape after a morning of coughing. But I don’t feel too bad.”

The castle’s cellar doubles on screen for Great Paxford’s air raid shelter as local residents take refuge from German bombers during World War Two.

“People assume a lovely village like this would be immune. But the proximity of air bases, particularly in the early part of the war, would have put you in the line of fire.

“There’s a nervous, oppressive quality down in the cellar. It’s good to film in a real location rather than a set built in a studio. You can feel the thickness of the brickwork and it’s slightly dank and cold.”

Ed plays Dr Will Campbell, the local GP - married to Erica (Frances Grey) and father to Kate, aged 19, (Rachel Hurd-Wood) and Laura, aged 18, (Leila Mimmack) - and not a well man himself.

“Dr Will has lived in Great Paxford for most of his married life and feels very much part of the community. I can’t imagine there are many GPs today who actually know all of their patients by name but that would have been the case then.

“He would have assisted in the birth of children, watched them grow up and might now be seeing them march off to war.

“Will served on the battlefields of the First World War and has seen the horrors of war at first hand. So he knows what it means for this new generation.

“My own maternal grandfather was a conscientious objector in the Second World War but served in the Medical Corps and was in mainland Europe for years. When he came back at the end of the war my mother, who was born in 1937, didn’t know who he was.”

At the outset of Home Fires, Will signals his intention to sign up to serve again.

“As a father of three daughters myself, I can empathise with the dilemma he must have had about going off to war. But the doctor at his medical examination picks up on something.

“When Will actually gets the diagnosis of lung cancer he’s aware what that means. He would know the survival rates.”

“He is a grounded, practical man. It doesn’t mean he’s unemotional or has developed a hard shell. But he’s a rationalist. Through his work he’s had to confront
some pretty awful things over the years and is better equipped to digest that sort of
information.

“I like the fact that after finishing his surgery he goes to the pub for a pint and a
smoke. He has a fatalistic attitude. Who can blame the man? There was nothing in
the script that I didn’t believe.”

Will comes under intense pressure from some mothers in the village who are
desperate to save their young sons from the firing line. One even offers him her life
savings.

“He’s on the horns of a dilemma. Several mothers come and say, ‘Will you please
write to the Army Medical Board and say this person is unfit for active service.’ They
are asking him to lie. Which is malpractice.

“Just as Will can’t divulge information that he learns because of doctor and patient
confidentiality, the flip side of that coin is that he cannot turn around and start lying
on your behalf either.

“That doesn’t mean it doesn’t cost him. He’s seen young men, exactly the age of
those women’s sons, blown to bits on the fields of the Somme and Flanders. So he
knows the reality of what might happen if these young men enlist.

“But he also knows the repercussions if these young men do not go off to fight and
do their duty. It’s certainly an unenviable position for him to be in.”

Ed had already researched this period in history while playing previous period drama
roles.

“The really crucial thing was about Will’s experience in the First World War. And I
have played two characters from that period. So not only have I done research, I’ve
had to run out of trenches and seen people shot on film.

“A lot of this may be eye-opening for a younger audience. Not least how different
things were back then in terms of social attitudes and how shocked people were by
certain things.

“Also I’m fairly convinced that the youth of today don’t know how to make a decent
blackberry jam. As a jam maker myself. I can speak with authority,” he smiles.

“Sadly I wasn’t around for the jam making scenes in Home Fires. But we have a little
plum tree in our garden and so I make plum jam. My wife’s uncle is a child of the
Second World War and his mum used to make damson jam when he was a kid. And
he asked my wife Amy if she could make some damson jam.

“Strange but true, 50 yards up the road from us in the front yard of our neighbour’s
house is a damson tree and I noticed it for the first time walking home from the
station that day. So I grabbed a bowl and a stepladder and walked back round, only
to find my neighbours were not in. And I did ring the bell.

“Evidently they were not interested in their damsons because they were all over the
floor. So I picked several pounds of damsons and made, if I say so myself, delicious
damson jam. Some eight jars, of which seven went to my wife’s uncle. Which I was
delighted to do.

“For my 40th birthday a friend of mine who lives in Northumberland gave me four
jars of homemade blackcurrant jam.

“I wrote to her and said, ‘I’ve actually been eating your jam three times a day.’ I put
it on porridge; I was eating it with cheese.

“So I’ve got a bit of a jam fixation.”
RUTH GEMMELL IS SARAH COLLINGBORNE

Life changed for women when the Second World War began in 1939.

“It was an extraordinary turning point for women. Having to fend for themselves and run a lot of the country,” says Ruth Gemmell.

“Home Fires is a really exciting and interesting drama revealing a side to the Women’s Institute that many may not realise or be aware of.”

Ruth plays Sarah Collingborne, married to Great Paxford vicar Adam (Mark Bonnar) and who is also the younger sister of Frances Barden (Samantha Bond).

“Sarah is quite a level-headed woman who adores her sister but tries to keep her in check, knowing she can get a little carried away sometimes.”

Women’s lives in the late 1930s were very different to today.

“The Women’s Institute did a lot about class issues. A lot of women across social divides didn’t really know each other. The WI led to them becoming friends and interacting with each other.

“There were fewer means for people to meet and socialise so the WI brought people together. It didn’t necessarily mean that it broke down all barriers but it certainly meant that people met.

“Meeting face to face is, of course, different to the sometimes ‘pretend’ friendships we may have online today. People would know each other pretty well. Those sort of communities are very close. The WI enabled women to have friendships away from the home.”

Home Fires brought together a strong female cast.

“That was fantastic. There are many things that women of a certain age get overlooked for. We’re roughly within the same age group. So that was really lovely.

“We’re very giddy when we’re all together. A really good bunch of women and a fantastic crew. A very happy atmosphere and all just fantastic to work with.”

Including a day picking blackberries.

“That was one of our very first days together as a group when we didn’t really know each other. And it was one of the funniest days I’ve ever had. We just laughed our way through picking blackberries - and it was such a beautiful day.

“People don’t forage around like that anymore. But now I keep looking at other things, like sweet chestnuts on the trees, thinking, ‘I must go and pick them.’ Things also taste better when you pick them yourself.”

Sarah’s husband Adam served as a regimental chaplain in World War One and was decorated for bravery. After returning home with his nerves shattered he met Sarah, who nursed him back to health.
“That kind of experience now going into another war is terrifying for these women who know the reality of what it can do. Adam is going off to war again and Sarah fears he will again come back a changed man.

“It was real estrangement then when men went away. People communicated through letters, if at all. None of today’s modern means of contact.

“Sarah and Adam have a very solid marriage. Even though she is agnostic. Which is quite an interesting thing, being married to the vicar. But they seem to manage with that. I guess after what they’ve both been through you can marry those things.”

With Adam away, the vicarage also becomes home to three RAF officers from a nearby air base, including Squadron Leader Nick Lucas (Mark Umbers).

“Sarah and Nick get on very well. In a way he is the male presence around the house while Adam is away. These were extraordinary times.

“Everyone had to make adjustments in the war, with the village taking in evacuees from the city. Some welcomed them with open arms and some didn’t. Sarah is open minded about it.”

Sarah’s clothes also helped Ruth get into character.

“The costumes are fantastic. I love the era. Sarah wears a lot of tweed, which is really warm. A lot of the costumes are originals and there are quite a few moth holes.

“The hair also helps. There’s a scene at night and I have my hair all curled and pinned up. Women slept like that every night so they could have a nice wave.”

Ruth was also called upon to fire a gun during filming.

“I’ve fired a gun on stage before but I’m always really rubbish at it in fairgrounds so, thankfully, I don’t have to hit anything.”
DANIEL RYAN IS BRYN BRINDSLEY

The director shouting “cut” took on a new meaning for Daniel Ryan as top of the chops village butcher Bryn Brindsley.

“I carve pork chops, I slice bacon. Over and over they shouted, ‘Be careful with the knives, Dan.’ There was a lot going on with the meat.

“You’ve got to look like you know what you’re doing. So there’s no point gingerly cutting through half a cow. You’ve got to get in there and do it.

“I’m sure they thought I was getting carried away at times. But I’ve still got all my fingers.”

Welsh-born Bryn runs Great Paxford’s butcher’s shop and is married to Miriam (Claire Price) with a 16-year-old son David (Will Attenborough).

“What’s interesting is I started to feel the character once I’d got hold of the meat. Sometimes the character comes to you through putting on a pair or shoes or an interesting tie. This was just having raw meat in my hands. That gave me a way in. It was odd but I became more tactile.

“Mark, the brilliant butcher who lives and works in Bunbury in Cheshire, spent a day with us and we used his shop. He was there to help me not cut my fingers off and gave me various cuts of meat to go home with. I’d made such a mess of what I was doing, until I got the hang of it, so they were unsellable.

“A lot of the equipment we were using is actually still in use by him or it existed in that shop and is now kept in storage. It’s surprising how much more physical the job would have been back then. It wasn’t motorised - it was all hand-cranked.”

Adds Daniel: “Bryn is a solid character, adores his family and is very happy in his job. He’s too old to go to war but ran off to fight in the First World War and understands why his son - and only child - wants to join up and fight.

“Back then there was the concept of all the lads together and fighting for your mates and your country. And Bryn knows that it doesn’t matter what he says. There is no way he will be able to change David’s mind.

“Whereas Miriam wants David to stay at home. It must have been an argument that went on in thousands of homes at the beginning of the Second World War, causing rifts in relationships.

“Bryn does bear the mental scars of having gone to war. He still can’t hold a knife steady in his hand. Going off to fight in the first war had a powerful effect upon him.

“And you’d think the bayonet and the butcher’s knife are one and the same. I would imagine that occasionally on the dark days, as he’s carving up a piece of meat, the odd memory would overtake him of what’s he’s been through and seen.
“There’s a very moving scene when Bryn follows his son to the bus stop as he goes off to war. He understands what his son has to do but he also knows the truth of what is waiting for him. And it breaks his heart. The minute David is gone, Bryn absolutely crumbles.

“I’ve got three boys, including one who is 16. So it was easy for me to play those scenes because I could put myself in that situation very easily. Except mine has gone off to do another thing that nobody should ever do - he’s gone to study acting.”

In happier moments, Bryn and Miriam dance together at a local wedding.

“We had a lovely time doing that. I was lucky on the rehearsal day because a lot of the male cast hadn’t been filming that day but I had. So I got to dance with all the girls. A real treat.

“I was surprised that I picked it up very quickly. I never think I’m the dandiest of dancers. Certainly the concept of going on Strictly Come Dancing would frighten the life out of me.

“I did a musical many years ago that Bruno Tonioli did the choreography for. I remember him saying very clearly to me, ‘Dan, you try so hard but you’re so bloody awful!’ But I enjoyed myself in the Home Fires’ dancing scenes.”

Many may think the sense of duty and community evident in Home Fires is lacking today.

“You look at things like ‘Black Friday’ with people fighting over TVs in the shops and it’s offensive, that level of greed. It’s horrible to see that going on and filming this series you can’t help realising, sadly, how times have changed. They really have. It’s a world away.

“In the past couple of years I’ve come to appreciate community and just trying to help your neighbours out a little more. It was normal to do that back then. Now we don’t even know who lives five doors down from us.

“I really do believe that community is massively important. Anything that helps people look out for the people who live around them is very welcome in 2015. Hopefully this will stir a few thoughts of that among the audience.”

Daniel thinks viewers will warm to Home Fires.

“I hope people take this show to their heart. It has all the makings of a proper saga. The life of a village is something I didn’t know anything about. You really believe Great Paxford existed and you want to follow the lives of those who live there.

“I grew up in Cheshire so I know Bunbury very well. I’m not going to say these villages haven’t moved on but they’re certainly little pockets of the past. Also an ideal place to shoot the series.

“It’s about sometimes remarkably humble stories and things you didn’t know were going on. The rallying round and the fact that most of the characters have had
experience of the First World War so they knew, in part, what to expect. It’s been a fascinating experience and a real education.”

Adds Daniel: “As an actor you get to have a dabble into what happens in other people’s lives. I never wanted to do anything else but be an actor and you get to delve under the skin of various people. Actors are very nosy as people and we get to peek behind various people’s curtains.

“A lot of people on a Sunday night are really miserable about the end of the weekend and that they’ve got to go back to work tomorrow. Back to the grind. But even when I’m unemployed and hoping for a job, Sunday nights are like, ‘Anything could happen this week. By Friday I could be anywhere in the world. Who knows?’

“Generally I’m just sat there staring at the phone,” laughs Daniel. “But the thought is there. That anything can happen. That is a real treat.”

And in the very unlikely event the acting career ever falters, Daniel knows he now has a second string to his bow.

“I did say to Mark, the butcher in Bunbury, ‘If nothing comes up in January, I might be giving you a call!’”
Chris Coghill found himself in hot water when he cleaned up in Home Fires.

The former EastEnders actor plays village farmer Stanley Farrow who washes the grime of the day away in a tin bath.

“That was interesting to film. It’s a serious scene and I was supposed to be completely naked. It’s quite funny trying to be deadly serious when you’re sat there in flesh-coloured briefs hoping for soap bubbles to cover up.

“The first tin bath they had was preposterous. I couldn’t even get in - it was tiny. The next one still wasn’t the biggest thing you’ve ever sat in.”

Co-star Clare Calbraith plays Stanley’s wife Steph and had the job of keeping the bath hot.

“Clare was coming backwards and forwards with buckets of hot water which she then had to very carefully aim between my legs. Fortunately she was very gentle with me.”

Adds Chris: “Stanley is a really lovely character. He’s not free with his chat but Stanley and Steph are still madly in love and, along with Little Stan (Brian Fletcher), they’re a solid family.

“The Farrow farm is on the outskirts of Great Paxford. Obviously living on a farm in any day and age is a hard manual life, to get up early, work all day and go to bed late. But that life works for the Farrowes.

“We filmed at a farm in Cheshire. All of the locations were absolutely gorgeous. Places that looked completely frozen in time. And we were also lucky to film in a period of quite glorious weather. It was a real joy to be on set.

“I had to do some dry stone walling and took to it like a duck to water. It was all working on instinct and quite extraordinary.

“When we started doing the scene I obviously had a pile of stones and a gap in the wall that needed fixing. And I found that I instinctively was putting the stones in the right place. If the acting goes pear-shaped I’m going to do a proper dry stone walling course!”

As a farmer Stanley is in a reserved occupation and could stay at home rather than fight. But his instinct is to join up.

“He was possibly too young and also needed on the farm at the time of the First World War. So he feels it is something he has to do.

“Just having that sense of duty and responsibility, which is very alien to some people today. ‘This is what I have to do. No matter how grim it is.’ It’s a big decision for him to make, to leave his wife and son behind.”
Adds Chris: “I’m very interested in the Second World War and have read a lot about it. So it was fascinating to see it from a different perspective of the people left behind.

“My interest started when I stayed in Normandy and visited the D-Day landing beaches and the graveyard with thousands of white crosses.

“I’ve always had a lot of respect for the way our country reacted. Seeing all of that and buildings that have never been re-built brought it all home. And then I started reading a lot more about the personal stories.”

When Stanley eventually goes off to war it is a real estrangement - with no hope of any immediate future contact aside from posted letters.

“Filming those scenes, you channel how you would actually feel if you were getting on a bus and saying goodbye to your own family.

“You’ve got no idea whether you’re going to come back or not. You know you’re going off to do something horrendous, to shoot people and potentially get shot yourself. So that scene on the bus was emotional.”

Stanley encourages his wife to attend the Women’s Institute.

“I guess that was quite open-minded for a man back then. But also what’s at the back of his mind is he knows he’s going off to war and he doesn’t want her to be completely isolated. So it would be good for Steph to have some friends and a social circle.

“It is forward thinking if you look at some of the other men and their attitude to the Women’s Institute. Some of the men view it as a real threat to them.”

Away from dry stone walling, herding cows and tin baths, Chris enjoyed taking to the dance floor with co-star Clare at a local wedding reception.

“As a farmer, Stanley has pretty much one look in terms of costumes. Wellingtons and corduroys. Although he has quite a cool long leather coat. But we do get to see him in all his finery at the wedding.

“Before that we had dancing lessons, which were quite hysterical. As was filming the dancing itself because you’ve got 20-odd actors all counting in their head, going, ‘One, two, three, one, two three.’ And then trying to make it look like you know what you’re doing.

“There was an awful lot of stepping on toes going on. Even so, I thoroughly enjoyed those scenes. But you’ll never see me on Strictly.”

Concludes Chris: “I was quite blown away when I first saw how Home Fires had been shot. It’s not particularly traditional for this kind of drama.

“I think the audience will view it as something quite different from what they have seen before.”
EPISODE SYNOPSIS

Episode 1
In the face of impending war with Germany, the Great Paxford WI faces a difficult decision. When president Joyce Cameron resigns and takes most of the membership with her, Frances Barden and her supporters must come together to resurrect the Institute, and recruit new members from unexpected places. Meanwhile, local doctor Will Campbell discovers the terrible reason why he can’t rejoin the army, and Miriam Brindsley will do anything to stop her son from enlisting. Claire Hillman is attracted to young postman Spencer Wilson, but she discovers that the path of true love never did run smooth.

Episode 2
It’s been three weeks since Britain declared war on Germany. Whilst Frances and Joyce battle for leadership of the new WI, the other members face their own problems: Erica and Will’s relationship is tested after his cancer diagnosis, whilst Pat searches for ways to get some respite from her unhappy marriage to Bob, and Miriam has one last chance to stop David from being called up. Meanwhile, Claire is determined to go after Spencer even if he does have a girlfriend. Newcomer Teresa Fenchurch gets off to a bad start with Alison, but her mishap brings a dashing RAF officer to the village.
Episode 3
The impact of the war begins to be felt in Great Paxford as the women must make sacrifices for the salvage effort. Both Adam and Stanley have difficult decisions to make, whilst Kate and Jack’s relationship intensifies. Claire finally plucks up the courage to ask Spencer out, but he’s hiding a secret that could ruin their relationship before it has even begun. When Alison resorts to desperate measures to pay a bill, she soon realises she will have to pay a much higher price for her actions. Pat’s situation with Bob goes from bad to worse, but will the women of the village discover what’s going on before it’s too late?

Episode 4
Secrets and lies are rife in the village. Miriam knows her deception can’t be kept from David forever, but she’s terrified of the consequences of him finding out. Steph is hiding a secret that threatens the farm’s future, and Teresa’s past comes back to haunt her when she receives an unexpected visitor who could destroy the life she has built for herself in Great Paxford. Whilst Kate and Jack make plans for the future, a jealous Laura complicates her relationship with boss Richard. Meanwhile, Erica is determined to intervene as Bob and Pat’s marriage grows even more destructive, and as the WI try to plan an air raid shelter for the village, Claire becomes an unwitting victim in the latest skirmish between Frances and Joyce.
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<td>Nigel Hughes</td>
<td>Graeme Hawley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connie Ward</td>
<td>Rachael Elizabeth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charlotte Bowers</td>
<td>Elizabeth Hopper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Theo Driscoll</td>
<td>Paul Barnhill</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
PRODUCTION CREDITS

Executive Producers
Francis Hopkinson
Catherine Oldfield

Writers
Creator and Lead Writer
Simon Block
Co Writer Episode 3
Mark Burt
Co Writer Episode 4
Tina Pepler
Producer: Episodes 1-3
Sue de Beauvoir
Producer: Episodes 4-6
Jeremy Gwilt

Directors
Episodes 1-3
Bruce Goodison
Episodes 4-6
Robert Quinn
Line Producer
Rachel Salter
Production Manager
Nina Sagemoen
Director of Photography
Joel Devlin

Casting Director
Kelly Valentine Hendry
Casting Director
Victor Jenkins
Script Editor
Sophie Bicknell
Composer
Samuel Sim
Production Designer
Dominic Hyman
Art Director
Sion Clarke
Costume Designer
Lucindra Wright
Make Up Designer
Janita Doyle

Editors
Episodes 1-2
Peter Oliver
Episode 3
Laura Morrood
Episodes 4-6
Mark Thornton
1st Assistant Director
Episodes 1-3
Mark Taylor
Episode 4-6
John Bennett
2nd Assistant Director
Christian Rigg
3rd Assistant Director
Alex Szygowski
Props Master: Jim Grindley
Graphic Designer: Alison Adams
Graphic Designer: Sam Moulsdale
Sound Recordist: Peter Brill
Location Manager: Lee Smith
Assistant Location Manager...: Helen Fisher

Filmed on location in Cheshire