



VERA



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Introduction

ITV's top-rating crime drama Vera returns for a seventh series this spring.

Based on the bestselling Inspector Stanhope books by award-winning writer Ann Cleeves, Vera and her team are drawn into four more compelling mysteries, including the death of a wildlife ranger, left alone overnight on a remote and inaccessible island.

Set around Newcastle and the stunning Northumberland countryside, Vera features complex and intriguing cases, atmospherically-shot landscapes and captivating performances, led by BAFTA, RTS and Golden Globe award-winning actress Brenda Blethyn who plays the unorthodox but brilliant DCI Vera Stanhope.

Brenda is reunited with co-stars Kenny Doughty, Jon Morrison, Noof McEwan, Lisa Hammond and Riley Jones.

Other actors joining them across the four new stand-alone films include Christopher Colquhoun (*Coronation Street, Casualty*), Suzanne Packer (*Stella, The Level, Casualty*), Robert Pugh (*Mr Selfridge, Dr Foster*), Ace Bhatti (*DCI Banks, Shetland, In The Club*), Struan Rodger (*Gone, Unforgotten, Prey*), Annie Hulley (*Doctors, Sirens, Emmerdale*), Emily Joyce (*My Almost Famous Family, Mutual Friends*) and Steve Evets (*One of Us, Looking for Eric*).

Series seven is produced by Letitia Knight and directed by Jamie Childs, Louise Hooper, Lee Haven Jones and John Hayes. Creative Director of ITVS London Drama, Kate Bartlett, is Executive Producer alongside Phil Hunter.

Brenda Blethyn was recently honoured at the North East Royal Television Society Awards for Best Performance in Vera. At the same event Vera won the Best Drama award.

Over seven series, Vera continues to enthral audiences worldwide. With sales in over 290 territories and growing, Vera is a huge success across a range of key markets, including US, Australia, France and Germany.

Series eight will go into production this summer.

Character biographies

DCI Vera Stanhope played by Brenda Blethyn

Heading up a team at Northumberland and City Police, Vera is obsessive about her work and dogged in her desire to uncover the truth at the heart of each case she leads. Perceived as an unconventional and unglamorous detective, Vera nevertheless has a wry sense of humour and faces the world with caustic wit, guile and courage.

For Vera, work is her life and her team is her family. Having been brought up by a neglectful father, she's constantly trying to find a sense of self-worth, feeling she has to prove herself in everything she does, although she would never admit this to her colleagues. Vera demands fierce loyalty and respect from her team, which she returns with the smallest glimmer of affection; one that hints at how ferociously Vera really cares for her team and for the victims of the crimes she investigates.

DS Aiden Healy played by Kenny Doughty

Detective Sergeant Aiden Healy has proved himself a strong and reliable partner to DCI Stanhope, who relishes his insight, commitment and diligence. Aiden, in turn, feels protective of his boss, knowing her obsessive nature and commitment to the job can sometimes be at the cost of her own wellbeing. But Aiden has distractions of his own to contend with, having recently become a father. With new-found parental responsibilities and a long row of sleepless nights, Aiden is going to have to keep his eye on the ball to not fall foul of his boss.

DC Kenny Lockhart played by Jon Morrison

Kenny is a very loyal and trusted member of the team. Even though Kenny can be slow to get going, Vera knows that he brings with him years of experience, and that she can rely on him when it counts.

DC Hicham Cherradi played by Noof McEwan

Hicham is a local lad with Moroccan heritage. Incredibly capable, his confidence can be both his greatest strength and his Achilles heel when he over-stretches himself. Thankfully, he's proven himself to be a valuable asset with his sharp mind and good instincts.

Character biographies continued:

DC Mark Edwards played by Riley Jones

Mark is the youngest member of Vera's team and has previously been perceived to be a bit wet behind the ears. However, his enthusiasm, keen eye for detail and self-drive continues to stand him in good stead with DCI Stanhope.

Pathologist Dr. Anthony Carmichael played by Christopher Colquhoun

Anthony (Tony to his friends and colleagues) recently moved to Newcastle and started working with DCI Stanhope and Northumberland & City Police. Tony's respect for Vera ensures that he doesn't have a sense of humour failure when it comes to dealing with the formidable DCI.

Intelligence Officer Helen Milton played by Lisa Hammond

Intelligence Officer Helen still occasionally works with the team, bringing a wealth of experience and expertise undercut with an irreverent and uncompromising sense of humour that keeps the team in check.

Cast interviews

Q&A with Brenda Blethyn – DCI Vera Stanhope



Q: Is it a simple process for you to recapture the character of Vera when you return to filming after the break between series?

“It’s nice to revisit old friends. Bearing in mind I get the scripts way ahead before we start filming. Sometimes I might find little anomalies in the plot, so I adjust little bits and send through my thoughts to the script editor and the writer so they can discuss and address it. By the time we all turn up on set it’s all systems go.

“I know the character Vera very well as I’ve been with her for so long. We have marvellous writers on the show and sometimes when a new writer comes on board I might have to say ‘There is no way Vera would do that.’ I explain why and refer them to a previous episode, which will demonstrate what I mean. They all appreciate the input.

“Vera author Ann Cleeves jokes that I police her characters for her. But that’s because I’m the constant on the production since it began and I think it’s important to take care of Ann’s creations. She jokes I have a forensic eye on Vera.”

Cast interviews

Q&A with Brenda Blethyn continued:

Q: The first new story, Natural Selection, was partly filmed on the Farne Islands. What was it like working on such an iconic location?

“It was beautiful on the Farne Islands even though we were bombed by the birds who pooped on us. But we must consider that lucky because there was quite a lot of it! It was lovely seeing the seals close up. We also got to visit the Longstone Lighthouse, which is where Grace Darling saved the shipwrecked sailors by making several journeys out in a rowing boat. Vera would probably have attempted that. And most likely would have perished. But she would have had a go.

Q: How were your sea legs on the police boat?

“I’ve got good sea legs. Like Vera, I grew up at the seaside. But unlike Vera’s dad, my dad didn’t go pinching eggs out on a boat in the middle of the night. So Vera would be used to that. The crossing to the Farne Islands can be quite choppy. Our first assistant director Natalie was like a Bond girl, riding pillion on a high-speed jet ski. Flying across the bay.”

Q: Another story sees Vera standing high up on the edge of a building. Did you need a stunt double?

“No, that really was me. It was the fifth floor or possibly higher. Every safety precaution was observed and if someone was required to approach the edge their ankles were tethered and at the other end of the rope was a stunt man ready to leap into action should the unthinkable happen.

“Good job as it was a sheer drop. Fortunately I’m perfectly all right with heights. In fact I didn’t want the chain on.”

Q: How would you sum up Vera after all these years?

“I would describe the drama, Vera, as an unshowy look at policing in the North East of England. And the beautiful landscapes and seascapes are characters in the dramas. They are very important. Vera is case focused. You don’t delve much into her personal life.

“Vera herself is a flawed character. She’s very clever, dishevelled and not prone to vanity. That’s what I like about it. It’s not reliant on lipstick or the catwalk.”

Cast interviews

Q&A with Brenda Blethyn continued:

Q: How does Vera come to terms with death in her job?

“Vera would find it as heartbreaking as anybody else. But she has got a job to do. To get justice done. And you’ve got to think of life in the face of death. Life goes on. Let’s catch whoever did this. But she is not insensitive to other people’s loss and grief. Although sometimes she might appear to be.”

Q: Why is Northumberland and the wider North East so important to the success of Vera?

“The North East is the best kept secret in the country. It’s absolutely beautiful. And when you know the history of the place with the loss of shipbuilding and the coal mining industries. Imagine the heartache that went with losing all of that. We’ve been experiencing it with the steel industry more recently. There was an episode in the last series where we were filming at Redcar on the day they pulled the plugs on a steel plant. It was heartbreaking.

“So it’s nice there is lots of film and television being made in the North East now, giving the area a much higher profile. I’m told tourism has increased by 25 per cent since Vera was aired. It also gives many local people work. A lot of the crew on Vera are local.”

Q: The focus in Vera is very much on the crimes. Do we learn any more about Vera herself in this new series?

“I don’t think you do. She mentions she was pretty fit at school. In an earlier episode you see that she used to run marathons. Aiden asks her what she studied at university. She told him that it was obvious and cracks a joke...because she didn’t actually go to university.”

Q: How has Vera’s relationship with DS Aiden Healy (Kenny Doughty) developed?

“They get on well. Vera respects him. She thinks he’s a bit of a softie but he’s good at his job. Aiden’s heart is in the right place and he is a kind, decent man. People often talk about him being her surrogate son. It’s never that. It’s nothing maternal, because she would do the same with Jon Morrison’s character, DC Kenny Lockhart, who she has a great respect for. Now there’s a flawed character! He’s still a DC and has longevity and a history with Vera. We’re all flawed. The whole team are great to work with.”

Cast interviews

Q&A with Brenda Blethyn continued:

Q: The burden of guilt weighs heavily in one story. That must be a daily torture?

“Guilt would be a burden for me. I would have to lift that burden and get rid of it. It would be too heavy for me to carry around. But some people do it. They probably think they’ve got away with it and don’t feel that guilt. But I would.”

Q: Vera’s trademarks include her hat and mac. Are there more than one of each?

“There are. We lost the hat a couple of series ago. We’d already shot half the scene and we were going back to shoot the other half. So we had to have the hat as Vera had been wearing it. Eventually it turned up. But as a result of that I went out and bought some more. So there are a couple of them now.

“Especially if they have to use a Vera double in a particular shot, or if a stunt driver does a long distance shot, they have to be dressed in Vera’s clothes. Although, truth be told, my stunt double has a big ginger beard. So if you were going to see him close up I don’t think the hat would make any difference at all. But there’s a hat and mac for him to wear too.

“One day when we were filming a group of ladies turned up with Vera macs and hats on. But they didn’t know they were dressed as Vera. They were simply a group of tourists in the area who just happened to be dressed that way.”

Q: Vera and DC Kenny Lockhart (Jon Morrison) sport a new look when they visit a meat factory as part of one investigation. Tell us about that.

“There was some resistance to wearing the hairnets in case they looked ridiculous. They did, but it was a food outlet and it was obligatory. Vera and Kenny wear yellow hairnets, as did all of the crew. Not a good look!!! But Vera’s not looking in a mirror. She’s not bothered. So I insisted it was right and proper to wear them.”

Cast interviews

Q&A with Brenda Blethyn continued:

Q: What is the reaction of local people when the Vera cast and crew arrive to film?

“The reaction of local people is very nice. It’s generally a very welcoming atmosphere. Which is lovely. We were filming once on a fairground. There was a very long tracking shot lasting a few minutes. We got there quite early before the fair opened and rehearsed the scene with Vera running past all of the fairground rides.

“We started filming and were almost at the end of the shot when suddenly a lady came out of a loo and hollered, ‘Vera! Oh Vera, I love you, Vera!’ And rushed over and gave me a cuddle. I started laughing. Then you heard the Director shout, ‘Cut.’ It was funny. Everybody laughed. So we just had to go back and shoot the scene all over again.”

Q: Vera also has plenty of fans in the rest of the world?

“We get lots of reaction from abroad. It’s growing in popularity in America. It also went from a minor channel in Australia to the main channel. And in Scandinavia it’s well liked and it’s really big in Holland too.

“My friend saw Vera dubbed into Spanish. He sent a tiny excerpt of it to me. Well I could have sworn it was me speaking Spanish! I also saw a Shakespeare I did in Germany and it was dubbed. And I’d swear blind that was me speaking although I don’t speak a word of German. In France it has a longer title. They call it ‘Les Enquêtes De Vera.’ Which means The Vera Inquiries.”

Q: TV dramas show the world from other people’s point of view. Do you think that empathy is more important today than ever?

“Empathy is always important. Really important. It’s a very tricky time at the moment with the world’s political events and tragedy. I don’t know the answer to it all or I’d be a politician rather than an actor. But I know entertainment is important. Even if it’s just as a diversion or an illumination of world events.”

Cast interviews

Q&A with Brenda Blethyn continued:

Q: You watch episodes 'live' as they are broadcast. How has social media added to that experience?

“Generally you get a nice reaction. Positive and upbeat. But you have to take it all with a pinch of salt. Sometimes I get a bit of stick because of my accent but mostly I don't. People talk about my Geordie accent. Vera doesn't have a Geordie accent. It's Northumberland, if anything. Her parents were kind of middle class and didn't have a strong accent. So it's born of that. There are so many variations of accents. Things change with the immediacy of travel and all that. Accents change and they're not as strong as they used to be. Which is a pity I think.”

Q: Vera comments about the use of a mobile phone in the new series. What are your thoughts about the role they now play in almost everybody's life?

“People are buried in their mobile phones today. Sometimes it's of necessity. But you just wish people would put them down for five minutes and have a conversation.

“I lament - and I think Vera would too - the lack of eloquence. I used to be a letter writer. I'm the youngest of a big family and I used to write to everybody. But then when the telephone came along we stopped doing that. Now you've got email and everything is for speed and brevity. So eloquence goes out the window. And I think that's a shame.

“People have the time to be more accurate if they write a letter. They say what they mean. And also they can change their mind about something before sticking a stamp on and sending it off. Many things are said today in haste that are regretted at leisure.”

Q: The series often features young guest actors who have not been seen on screen before by a mainstream audience. Is that important?

“I think it's very important to help younger people get an opportunity because it's hard to get a foot in the door these days. There's a wonderful actress who I fought for to get her an audition. I said, 'I'm not asking you to give her the part, I'm just asking you to see her.' And I'm glad I did because eventually they did see and cast Alexandra Mardell, who plays Kelly Horton in the second episode of this new series. She got the role and I loved her. Thought she was wonderful.

Cast interviews

Q&A with Brenda Blethyn continued:

“I love to see new faces. A series like Vera only survives on the quality of the guest actors. We know Vera. Or think we do. We know the world she lives in. We know her team. We think we know Northumberland. We enjoy being there. But what makes it interesting is the guest actors who come in and the wonderful new scripts our writers come up with.

“There is a young lad in the final story. We filmed on a farm and he was very shy to start with. So I started having a bit of banter with him to make him feel at ease. He started laughing and then started improvising with me and he would come in with some really good lines. That was a real pleasure. He was game when I told him to climb all over Vera’s motor. Then when he got up there I said, ‘Hey, hey, hey, get off!’”

Q: Aside from paying the bills, what has being an actor given you?

“When you film in various places, like the food factory and a scrap-yard, you see how hard other people work. We work hard too and very long hours at that, but we are doing something we really enjoy. Maybe those people enjoy doing their jobs too. But it looked laborious. I felt I was the more fortunate one. It makes you realise how hard people strive to make a living.

“Making a film in the Isle of Man, I learned how to drive a bus. They said I did rather well and would pass my test if I put in for it. There are lots of things like that.”



'THE NEW QUEEN OF CRIME'
Sunday Mirror

**CLEEVES AWARDED THE HIGHEST ACCOLADE IN
CRIME WRITING: THE 2017 DIAMOND DAGGER**

With over 1.5 million copies sold worldwide, Ann Cleeves is one of Britain's most successful crime fiction novelists. Her bestselling books are loved in print and on screen.

In September 2017 she will publish, *The Seagull*, Cleeves' searing eighth novel in the Vera Stanhope series, about corruption deep in the heart of a community, and about fragile, and fracturing, family relationships.

Sunday Times bestseller, Cleeves, has written 30 novels and is translated into as many languages. Before her writing career took off, Ann worked as a probation officer, bird observatory cook and auxiliary coastguard. In 2015, Cleeves chaired the Theakstons Old Peculier Crime Writing Festival, during which Vera was voted the UK's favourite fictional detective.

As well as seeing her Vera brought to life on screen by the wonderful Brenda Blethyn, her other crime series, *Shetland*, is due to return to BBC One as filming for the fourth series starts soon starring Douglas Henshall as Jimmy Perez.

More about *The Seagull*:

A visit to her local prison brings DI Vera Stanhope face to face with an old enemy: former detective superintendent, and now inmate, John Brace. Brace was convicted of corruption and involvement in the death of a gamekeeper – and Vera played a part in his downfall.

Brace promises Vera information about the disappearance of Robbie Marshall, a notorious wheeler-dealer, if she will look out for his daughter and grandchildren. He tells her that Marshall is dead, his body buried close to St Mary's Island in Whitley Bay. However, when a search team investigates, officers find not one skeleton, but two.

Author Ann Cleeves

This cold case takes Vera back in time, and very close to home, as Brace and Marshall, along with a mysterious stranger known only as 'the Prof', were close friends of Hector, her father. Together, they were 'the Gang of Four', and Hector had been one of the last people to see Marshall alive. Vera must confront her prejudices and unwanted memories to dig out the truth, as the past begins to collide dangerously with the present . . .

Praise for Ann Cleeves:

'The best living evoker of landscape' – *Guardian*

'If there is a successor to Ruth Rendell's alter-ego Barbara Vine, it must surely be Ann Cleeves' – *Herald*

'An evocative and intriguing seventh novel in a series that gets better and better.'
– *Woman & Home*

'The sense of queasy claustrophobia recalls PD James at her best' – *Express*

Episode 1 | Natural Selection | written by Helen Jenkins



DCI Vera Stanhope (Brenda Blethyn) is drawn into a suspicious death on Ternstone, a remote and inaccessible island off the coast of Northumberland, home only to numerous species of birds and the rangers who observe them. The last thing anyone expected to see was a body, cruelly washed up on the shore.

Gemma Wyatt, 28, was an experienced ranger who lived and worked on Ternstone for the Northumbria Wildlife Trust. While her devastated fiancé, Ryan (Matthew Wilson), and colleagues, led by Head Ranger Sophia (Suzanne Packer), believe Gemma's death was an accident, marks found on her body quickly prove otherwise. But as Gemma was left alone on the island overnight, the question remains, who could have made the treacherous journey out to sea and up the island's impenetrable coastline to kill her, and why?

As suspicions turn to Gemma's family and workmates, Vera starts to piece together an altogether different portrait of the popular and successful ranger, aided by DS Aiden Healy (Kenny Doughty), DC Hicham Cherradi (Noof McEwan), DC Kenny Lockhart (Jon Morrison) and the latest addition to the team, pathologist Dr Anthony Carmichael (Christopher Colquhoun). In the process, Vera will unearth a web of secrets, rivalries and years of buried resentment that will lead her to the killer.

Cast and Production credits

Cast credits | Natural Selection

DCI Vera Stanhope.....	BRENDA BLETHYN
DS Aiden Healy.....	KENNY DOUGHTY
DC Kenny Lockhart.....	JON MORRISON
DC Hicham Cherradi.....	NOOF MCEWAN
Pathologist Dr. Anthony Carmichael.....	CHRISTOPHER COLQUHOUN
DC Mark Edwards.....	RILEY JONES
Helen Milton.....	LISA HAMMOND
Ryan Campbell.....	MATTHEW WILSON
Sophia Ashbrook.....	SUZANNE PACKER
Vicki Hogarth.....	GEORGIA MAGUIRE
Jamil Carter.....	MAWAAN RIZWAN
Peter/Tom.....	JOE BLAKEMORE
Michael Hogarth.....	EWAN STEWART
Alice Wyatt.....	KERRIE HAYES
Gareth Andersen.....	ANDREW HAVILL
Caroline Andersen.....	EMILY JOYCE

Cast and Production credits

Cast credits | Dark Angel

DCI Vera Stanhope.....	BRENDA BLETHYN
DS Aiden Healy.....	KENNY DOUGHTY
DC Kenny Lockhart.....	JON MORRISON
DC Hicham Cherradi.....	NOOF MCEWAN
Pathologist Dr. Anthony Carmichael.....	CHRISTOPHER COLQUHOUN
DC Mark Edwards.....	RILEY JONES
Joe Connell.....	ROBERT LONSDALE
Adam Gascoigne.....	DOUGLAS RUSSELL
Brian Bennick.....	NIGEL BETTS
Diane Weaver.....	ANNIE HULLEY
Eddie Thurston.....	ROBERT PUGH
Stuart Mayfield.....	ACE BHATTI
Kelly Horton.....	ALEXANDRA MARDELL
Jeb Branning.....	DEREK HUTCHINSON
Fr O'Brien.....	STRUAN RODGER
Val Wilcox.....	MARJORIE YATES
John Hammond.....	MARK ASANTE

Cast and Production credits

Cast credits | Broken Promise

DCI Vera Stanhope.....	BRENDA BLETHYN
DS Aiden Healy.....	KENNY DOUGHTY
DC Kenny Lockhart.....	JON MORRISON
DC Hicham Cherradi.....	NOOF MCEWAN
Pathologist Dr. Anthony Carmichael.....	CHRISTOPHER COLQUHOUN
DC Mark Edwards.....	RILEY JONES
Jamie Marshall.....	FRASER WALL
Lucy Curran.....	AYOOLA SMART
Rory Marston.....	CHRIS GORDON
Alan Marston.....	STUART GRAHAM
Jennifer Marston.....	HEBE BEARDSALL
Steve Devonshire.....	STEVEN ELDER
John Greenhill.....	PHILIP ARDITTI
Shona Adams.....	MICHELLE TATE
Derek Stoddart.....	STEVEN HILLMAN
Ian Holland.....	MICHAEL SHAEFFER
Eva Motian.....	NATHALIE ARMIN

Cast and Production credits

Cast credits | The Blanket Mire

DCI Vera Stanhope.....	BRENDA BLETHYN
DS Aiden Healy.....	KENNY DOUGHTY
DC Kenny Lockhart.....	JON MORRISON
Pathologist Dr. Anthony Carmichael.....	CHRISTOPHER COLQUHOUN
DC Mark Edwards.....	RILEY JONES
DC Hicham Cheddadi.....	NOOF MCEWAN
Mal Hinkin.....	DAVID WILMOT
Nell Hinkin.....	KATE DICKIE
Claire Tovey.....	KEMI-BO JACOBS
Janusz Hiszpanski.....	FLORIAN GHIMPU
Blasej Bobiensi.....	ROBERT LUCKAY
Jo Travers.....	LU CORFIELD
Jack Madden.....	MARTIN MCCANN
Owen Travers.....	KIERON BIMPSON
George Wooten.....	STEVE EVETS
Meryl Fairchild.....	NATALIE KLAMAR
Gary Tovey.....	JONJO O'NEILL
Erin Michaels.....	SHANNON HAYES
Woody.....	COSMO JARVIS
Zoe Merrin.....	CLARA INDRANI

Cast and Production credits

Production credits

Executive Producers.....KATE BARTLETT
.....PHIL HUNTER
Producer.....LETITIA KNIGHT
Writers.....HELEN JENKINS
.....PAUL MATTHEW THOMPSON
.....ROBERT MURPHY
.....MARTHA HILLIER
Directors..... JAMIE CHILDS
.....LOUISE HOOPER
.....LEE HAVEN JONES
.....JOHN HAYES
Directors of Photography.....OLLIE DOWNEY
.....ED MOORE
.....RICHARD STODDARD
Head of Production.....GAIL KENNETT
Line Producer.....WILL NICHOLSON
Script Editor.....JONNY RICHARDS
Casting Director.....MAUREEN DUFF
Editors.....DAVID FISHER
.....MATT GRAY
.....CHRISTOPHER WATSON
Production Designer.....PATRICK BILL
Art Director.....PHILIP BROWN
Prop Master.....JAMES ALLEN

Cast and Production credits

Production credits continued:

First Assistant Directors..... NATALIE SEGAL
.....JACK CASEY
Second Assistant Director.....JAMIE HAMER
Third Assistant Director.....LA'TOYAH MCDONALD
Costume Designer.....MARLENE LAWLOR
Make Up Designer.....LESLEY FAULKNER
Composer.....BEN BARTLETT
Location Manager.....MARTIN CAMPBELL
Sound Recordist.....TONY MEERING
Production Co-ordinator.....FAHIMA CHOWDHURY



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