

# VERA



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# VERA

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## INTRODUCTION

The much-celebrated detective series, VERA, is back with three new compelling feature-length episodes. Starring the internationally acclaimed and award-winning actress Brenda Blethyn as DCI Vera Stanhope, the thirteenth series sees the return of actor and director David Leon as DI Joe Ashworth.

Joining Brenda and David across the feature-length episodes are Jon Morrison as DC Kenny Lockhart, Riley Jones as DC Mark Edwards, Sarah Kameela Impey as Pathologist Dr. Paula Bennett and Rhiannon Clements (*Ridley, Hollyoaks*) as new and ambitious DC Steph Duncan, who joins Vera's team.

In the opening episode, titled *Fast Love*, DCI Vera Stanhope (Brenda Blethyn) is called to a quiet country lane where a young man has been found dead following a collision with a car. Vera discovers that the victim is a popular market trader so heads down to his pitch to start to put together an idea of who the man is.

As the investigation gathers pace, Vera learns that this cheeky chappy was a complex character. Antagonistic, arrogant and able to get what he wanted but did all of this come at a price? Adding to the complexity of the case, Vera is taken aback by Joe Ashworth's (David Leon) return and is unsure of his motives.

Other actors appearing in the first episode include Nimmy March (*Agatha Raisin, Midsomer Murders*), Amit Shah (*Mr Bates vs the Post Office, Happy Valley, The Other One*), Stephen Lord (*Coronation Street, Safe House*), Patrick McNamee (*Our Girl, Inspector George Gently*), Andrew Dunn (*The Syndicate, Doctors*), Bryan Dick (*Ridley, The Split*), Samantha Seager (*Coronation Street, This is Vanity*), Beruce Khan (*War of the Worlds, The Capture*) and television newcomers Travis Ross, Evie Hargreaves and Susan Jayne-Robinson.

## INTRODUCTION CONTINUED

The first feature length episode, *Fast Love*, is written by series regular Paul Matthew Thompson (*Ridley, Shakespeare & Hathaway: Private Investigators*) and directed by Claire Winyard (*Our Girl, Call the Midwife*).

Phil Mulryne has written the second and third feature-length episodes, *Tender* and *Salt & Vinegar*. *Tender* is directed by Jermain Julien (*Death in Paradise, Grantchester*), while *Salt & Vinegar* is directed by Paul Gay (*Ridley*).

The three self-contained crime stories in the new series draw inspiration from the best-selling novels and characters created by acclaimed crime writer Ann Cleeves.

VERA is made by Silverprint Pictures, part of ITV Studios, with executive producers Will Nicholson and Kate Bartlett overseeing the production. Will Nicholson also takes on the role of producer for the new series. Overseeing production on behalf of ITV is Drama Commissioner Huw Kennair-Jones.

ITV Studios distributes VERA internationally.

Series 1-12 is available on ITVX.







## 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. Unconventional and unglamorous maybe, but Vera 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. Vera really cares for her team and for the victims of the crimes she investigates.

### **DI Joe Ashworth played by David Leon**

When we last saw Joe, he was heading off to bigger and brighter things. He's built a successful career since leaving Vera and the team all those years ago. Joe is a respected police officer from the Met to GMP and has worked across a number of disciplines from Serious Crime, to Fraud to S019. At home, he's still a dedicated father, and husband to Celine. He returns to Northumberland and City Police as a Detective Inspector. Higher status and with his own agenda. Vera's going to love that!

### **DC Kenny Lockhart played by Jon Morrison**

Kenny is a very loyal and trusted member of the team. Though Kenny works at his own pace, Vera knows that he brings with him years of experience and instinct, and she can rely on him when it counts. Plain-spoken if occasionally tactless, Kenny possesses a keen memory for cases long past and is often surprisingly savvy with contemporary technology and social media.



## CHARACTER BIOGRAPHIES

### **DC Steph Duncan played by Rhiannon Clements**

Steph is energetic, committed, and loves to be at the heart of an investigation. She likes meeting victims, interviewing suspects and witnesses, being out and about, and chasing new leads. She doesn't like being sat at a desk, and the day-to-day admin that is such a huge part of the job can 'get on her nerves'. Her dislike of this side of modern policing might cause some friction with Vera, but her impatience gets results and helps keep the fire burning – there will be no slowing down when she's involved in a case. Vera can find her a bit much, but sees her potential.

### **DC Mark Edwards played by Riley Jones**

Since joining Vera's team from uniform, Mark has become a skilled and reliable detective. As one of the younger members of the squad, Mark is less outspoken and more introspective, preferring to channel his energy into meticulous analysis and research. His enthusiasm, keen eye for detail and self-drive means that Vera now counts on the invaluable information he uncovers to push an investigation forward.

### **Pathologist Dr. Paula Bennett played by Sarah Kameela Impey**

Paula's acerbic sense of fun intertwines with her brilliant forensic brain and detail driven approach. She's sometimes mistaken for indulging in dark humour but actually it's enthusiasm for the science of the investigation. She still feels the death of her father which gives her empathy when working a crime scene but she never lets her emotions get in the way of gathering the facts. Especially when there's an unusual death with some intriguing science to investigate. Vera isn't quite sure what to make of Paula at first as she's a bit of a whirlwind. Paula is brilliant at what she does but occasionally needs reminding that not everyone's brain works at the same rate that her's does.



## INTERVIEW WITH BRENDA BLETHYN

**Q: How is Vera when we meet her again in the first film of series 13: *Fast Love*?**

“Vera is on her own at the start of the new series. DS Aiden Healy (Kenny Doughty) is no longer around and so Vera has to explain what has happened to him.”

**Q: David Leon returns having played Joe in the first four series of *VERA*. How did your screen reunion with David come about?**

“After we filmed *The Rising Tide* at the end of 2022 I didn’t want to do any more without Kenny Doughty, who had decided to leave. But I said, ‘I’ll think about it if you can see if David Leon is available to return as Joe Ashworth.’ And so they did and here I am.

“I was broken-hearted when David left after Series Four and equally overjoyed when I heard he was coming back as the relationship between Vera and Joe worked so well. They have all of that early history together.

“I wouldn’t have continued if David had not agreed to come back. I just didn’t want to start another board game with somebody else when I know I’m not going to do many more. And who would want to do it anyway?”



## INTERVIEW WITH BRENDA BLETHYN CONTINUED

### **Q: What was it like filming together again?**

“It was fabulous. Working together was certainly as good as I remembered, if not better. It’s a shock for Vera when Joe appears. She’s pleased to see him. But then her nose is really put out of joint when she finds out why he’s there.”

### **Q: What does David’s return bring to the production?**

“David’s return helps refresh the series. People were very upset when he left after having played Joe in the first four series of Vera. And people were delighted when it was announced that he was returning for these new films.

“It also took away the disappointment of Kenny leaving. Because people also loved Aiden. There is no-one better to replace the character of Aiden Healy on screen than Joe Ashworth. David is also delightful to work with. What a nice man he is. He also once directed an episode of Vera. A series eight story called *Black Ice* screened in 2018. So he’s on the ball. He knows what he is doing and I think it shows on screen. He’s good.”

### **Q: Does Joe’s return bring back some memories from their shared past?**

“There are echoes in the first new film of the very first Vera episode which keen fans may spot. Including a scene at the North Shields fish quay where her father Hector’s ashes were scattered.

“The week after we had finished filming for series 13 I went back there to unveil a sculpture - ‘The Herring Girl’ - to honour the herring girls. They had a very hard life following the herring fishing fleet in all weathers from the north of Scotland and down the east coast of England. In the days before refrigeration they were a team of women whose job was to gut, salt and pack the fish into barrels using sharp knives so that it could be sold back on land. A heroic job to do.

“It was a delight to travel back to North Shields from London on a day trip with my brother to remember those women. There were lots of children from local schools there for the unveiling ceremony and when they saw me, they were chanting ‘Vera, Vera’ in the style of the Newcastle United football chant ‘Shearer, Shearer!’”

## INTERVIEW WITH BRENDA BLETHYN CONTINUED

### **Q: Vera has a new face on her team in this series?**

“DC Steph Duncan, played by Rhiannon Clements, brings a new vitality to the team, another dynamic. Which is a bonus. She’s ambitious and wants to progress to prove herself as a valued member of Vera’s team. But, as ever, Vera doesn’t cut her any slack. Joe tells Steph that Vera can be ‘infuriating’. Which I agree with!”

### **Q: Where did you film this first series 13 story?**

“It involves a number of market stall holders so we filmed scenes in Hexham in Northumberland, which we call Benthams. It was a lovely setting with the real market there and Hexham Abbey across the road. I was able to take a few minutes off to take and look inside the Abbey.

“We filmed a scene where Vera is sat opposite a market stall holder, played by Andrew Dunn, in a local cafe as he is eating a fry up. We couldn’t do too many takes of that as he would have eaten three plates full. As it was, he did rather well.

“I also fell over a few times when Vera was running on a slippery floor in another scene. Or at least walking fast! I went flying but I was OK.”

### **Q: You met a group of young VERA fans while filming elsewhere in Northumberland?**

“Some children from Corbridge Middle School came to watch the filming on a new estate close to their school. I went and chatted to them. I love it when kids are enthusiastic to come and find out how it all goes on behind the scenes. I tried to explain to them about all of the different jobs that each member of the crew were doing.”

### **Q: This is the first film shot at the new Vera studio base in Killingworth, North Tyneside, after moving from Wallsend?**

“The Vera sets were transported there from Wallsend so they look identical. But we also now have a long corridor to film in and a proper reception going into the car park with a new frontage to the police station with a ‘Northumberland and City Police’ sign outside.”



## INTERVIEW WITH BRENDA BLETHYN CONTINUED

**Q: Vera is in a rush in the second film: *Tender*. She always seems to be in a hurry?**

“Vera is always in a rush. That is her life. Work is her life. It’s always an emergency when she is called out to work. But Vera is silenced for once in this story. Having suffered with toothache throughout. She’s the type of person who avoids going to the dentist at all costs. But while Vera is not one for going to the dentist, I have no fear. What’s the point of being frightened?

“A charity asked me if I would visit somebody in Northern Ireland who was dying of cancer. So I went to visit him and asked how he planned anything. He said, ‘I just live for today. I don’t think ahead. Don’t worry. Just plan for today and take things as they come. Don’t worry ahead about things. What is the point in doing that?’

“I told him I was about to clean out the shed at my house. It was cram packed with stuff, together with spiders and cobwebs. And I was frightened to do it because I’m not a fan of spiders. So I told him, ‘Do you know what, I’m going to apply that when I get home and clean that shed out. I’m frightened I’m going to see a spider.

“But now I’m not going to be frightened UNTIL I see a spider.’ And I cleaned the whole shed out. There were spiders but I carried on. They scuttled away being more frightened of me. So I did it all on my own. And it’s the same about going to the dentist. I’m not frightened - until there is a reason to be.”

**Q: The third film is called *Salt and Vinegar*. Where did you film that?**

“We filmed that on the seafront at Redcar and it features two fish and chip shops. Vera is very partial to fish and chips. Lovely. I also like fish and chips. I don’t have them very often but I do like them.

“It was a very hot day when we were filming on the seafront there and an 81-year-old lady who was among the fans watching us fainted. We saw a bit of commotion in the crowd and our crew medics went over. When they came back I said, ‘What’s up?’ They said, ‘A lady has passed out in the heat.’ I said, ‘Is she alright?’ They said, ‘Yeah, yeah, yeah, she’s fine. She’s sitting down now but she wants to stay and watch the filming.’

## INTERVIEW WITH BRENDA BLETHYN CONTINUED

“And so we carried on and then I saw the medic go over there again. I said, ‘Are you sure that lady is alright?’ They said, ‘Yes, stop worrying about it.’ Then I saw them go back again and it did worry me. I said, ‘Sorry. I’m going to have to stop filming. I want to go and make sure that lady is alright.’ So I went over and I chatted to her for a few minutes.

“She was going, ‘Ohhh...it’s Vera!’ And she was alright. Well blow me down, when I got home it was on the TV news that night! They had gone to the lady’s house and interviewed her. She was so sweet and excited!

“So many people come to watch the Vera filming. The fans are just so generous. A lady turned up from Australia and gave me a cloth kangaroo. I was also given a crochet replica of Vera, about a foot tall. It’s marvellous. It has pride of place on my mantelpiece.”

**Q: We see a different side to Vera in this film?**

“There’s a scene where she is out doing the gardening at her cottage. The script called for ‘relaxed Sunday clothes’. So Vera has got a pair of dungarees on and Wellington boots. The dungarees belonged to her dad Hector. Vera is not very green fingered. She did learn a thing or two from her mum. But her enthusiasm for it is not there. We also learn a little more about Vera’s past in this series.”

**Q: What’s the future for Vera? After filming a series you always say ‘never again’. But then change your mind?**

“At the moment there is nothing planned. But that’s not to say they’re not talking about it. There might be a winding up. I don’t know. Ann Cleeves is also writing her 11th Vera book. So, there’s also that to consider. But a whole series? I think not. We’ll see.”





## INTERVIEW WITH DAVID LEON

### **Q: How did your return to VERA come about?**

“The producer reached out to me and we had a conversation about Joe returning. It was something I hadn’t really considered previously as being an option. Although it was a question, I had probably been asked by Vera fans and others every day since I left at the end of series four, with Joe last seen on screen in 2014. It felt like there was some unfinished business there. So it was a nice opportunity to come back and, to some extent, tie up some loose ends.

“I had obviously kept an eye on the show from afar. Also coming back in 2017 to direct a Vera film called Black Ice screened in 2018. I worked with Kenny Doughty (DS Aiden Healy) then and really like him both as a human being and as an actor. I also have huge respect for Kenny and his contribution to the series. As much as I had loved working on Vera for the first four series, it felt like it was the right time then to pass the baton on. I’d worked with Kenny before on a film with the director Mike Figgis. So I always felt Vera was in very good hands when he came in as Aiden. Then when I directed him on Black Ice it was lovely to be on the same team and watch close up how good he is as an actor.

“When Benda and I first started Vera way back when it was a pilot episode and we had no idea it would develop into a series, let alone run for as long as it has done.

## INTERVIEW WITH DAVID LEON CONTINUED

“I’m incredibly proud of the show and what everyone has achieved collectively. And particularly proud at the way the region has taken it to its heart.

“The North East has a very strong identity. And the way in which Newcastle and Northumberland sit in this space - very much English but the most northern city and the area exists between Scotland and England as an island unto itself in a way. There’s a great pride that comes from that and a real sense of identity. It’s also such a beautiful and, to some extent, untapped landscape. It was always waiting for a show like Vera to come along and shine a light on that.

“Vera was ahead of its time in respect of it being a female led show at a time when there wasn’t a lot of those dramas around. Where the central character is also a woman of a certain age without vanity. That went against the grain and it’s a huge credit to Brenda for taking that on and making it what it has become. But also to ITV for seeing the potential in that. When Vera was first brought to the screen it sat in a space that British TV didn’t really do. There was nothing like it. And when a show has a life as long as Vera has done it goes through cycles. Sometimes it just needs to re-invent itself somehow to breathe new life into the world.”

**Q: How has Joe changed since he was last seen on screen almost 10 years ago?**

“A period of time has gone by. You grow and evolve as a person through those cycles of life and the character reflects that. When I agreed to come back part of the discussions we had were, ‘What would it mean for the character?’ To pick up where we left off was not hugely interesting to me, personally. And I don’t think it’s that interesting for the audience. There needed to be a justification, a reason, for why Joe has come back. Along with a readdressing of the balance in terms of the dynamic of the relationship between Joe and Vera. So we talked a lot about what that would look like.

“Joe has been following his ambition, working for the Metropolitan Police in London. Working in a higher pressure and corporate environment. There’s something very human about him now coming back to the place he feels grounded by. That he regards as being home. Working alongside this woman who is unconventional but brilliant at what she does and is a huge inspiration. And the complete opposite of everything he has learned and been taught in a much more rigid system in London. It sparks something in him.

## INTERVIEW WITH DAVID LEON CONTINUED

“At the same time as life is throwing other challenges at him. He’s entering the middle stage of life where his kids are starting to get to a point where they don’t need him. While at the same time facing another family challenge. It’s Vera who keeps him going through this difficult time. I think people will relate to his story and the phases we go through as we mature through life. That was an interesting way back into the character.

“It did feel a very natural kind of thing to put Joe’s clothes on, walk back on to the set and feel very much at home. But it was also very important to mark the difference as to where Joe has been and what he has experienced in order to come full circle.

“In this new series there is a level of me trying to re-understand what Joe is all about. I had also, perhaps, taken for granted that I knew who Vera was. My understanding as an actor of who Vera was had been frozen in time. And, of course, that’s not the case. Vera has also evolved. She has grown as a person and as a character. It was a surprise to both of us to be confronted with these two different individuals.

“Much of which was the same, much of which had changed. There was a recalibration that had to take place both on set and within the context of the characters and their story arcs over the course of these three new episodes. Which I think keeps things fresh. It was challenging but as a consequence very rewarding.”

### **Q: Why has Joe returned?**

“Joe is now a Detective Inspector working for the College of Policing and turns up to oversee Vera and her team and her ways of working. Without any intention of sticking around. There’s a real conflict as a result of that. But he gets sucked in to the thrill of working alongside Vera. Feeling inspired by the maverick nature in which she works. Vera works very much on instinct and doesn’t play by the rules. That lights a fire under him that he hasn’t experienced for a while.

“Previously when Joe was working alongside Vera it felt like a maternal relationship on her part. Now he has come back and demands to be seen as an equal. Which doesn’t go down very well to start with. Vera pushes back. On both sides it takes a little while to reframe the dynamic of that relationship.



## INTERVIEW WITH DAVID LEON CONTINUED

“It was very reflective and symbolic of the relationship you have with your parents and the relationship parents have with their children. As you grow up the parents have to reframe that view of you as a child. As you become an adult in your own right.

“Joe’s return is a shock to Vera and she’s not best pleased when she finds out why he is back. There’s always been conflict there. But there’s also a real mutual respect between two very different characters. Joe is a family driven man while Vera is solely focused on the work and doesn’t understand when someone cannot live up to her expectations and standards. The tension in their relationship is exacerbated in that he has come back, very respectfully, but is stepping on toes. One of the things Vera cannot abide from anyone is being told what to do. There’s also a certain suspicion that comes with Joe’s reappearance. But his return also reignites a nostalgia and a sentimentality for them both.”

### **Q: Joe questions something close to Vera’s heart?**

“He thinks police resources would be better spent getting rid of her Land Rover, which belonged to her father Hector, and replacing it with a more efficient modern vehicle.

“It’s amazing how the Land Rover has become so iconic. Along with Vera’s hat. So symbolic of the show. It’s fascinating to see what has happened to something you started when it was literally a piece of paper and a few people in a room reading words from a script. Having no idea where it was going to go. And then to see it become something watched by a huge number of people over many years. With a very loyal fan base. It’s quite overwhelming in many ways. We have people turning up in droves to watch filming. If they can’t have a photo with Brenda in her hat they’ll take one of the car. It’s amazing to see how those things take off.”

### **Q: Joe says at one stage that he lost sight of what matters in life. Do you think that will resonate with viewers?**

“I think we can all relate to the fact the world is complicated and never more so than at present. There is a tendency that the job you do can become people’s sole sense of identity. And without that they can feel a bit lost. It’s what drives us. Joe followed the work when he went to London. In this modern world where we are always contactable and expected to reply to an email within half an hour, no matter what time of day it may arrive.

## INTERVIEW WITH DAVID LEON CONTINUED

“It puts a different sort of pressure on us all and an expectation. It’s then very difficult to find any level of balance in our lives.

“Joe is very ambitious and has been successful since leaving the North East. The work has sucked him in. So then finding that work-life family balance has brought him full circle. There’s something very relatable and universal about that notion. Particularly in the context of the grounding landscapes and worlds Vera exists within. The vast horizons and beautiful rural areas that feel other worldly to some extent.

“The region has a wonderful contrast between urban, rural and coastal and is very diverse. Then if you go south towards Teeside you have the industrial landscape there. It is other worldly when you compare it to the urban lifestyle of metropolitan London. So I think there is a recalibration that takes place when Joe comes back to the region that I can certainly relate to. Where it just feels like home. It looks like home and smells like home. The rhythm and the melody of the sound of people’s voices and the warmth and generosity of the people you encounter reminds you of those things you grew up with and the element of human nature you hold so dear.

“The humour and generosity of spirit that you just don’t get everywhere. But you take for granted being somebody who has either lived or grown up in the area. It really is very special in that way.

“Joe still remains very ambitious, committed to the work and driven by the work. But it’s taken something like what he is now experiencing to make him open his eyes and see his life slightly differently.”

**Q: Does this series reflect back on some of Vera and Joe’s shared history?**

“There are echoes in the first film ‘Fast Love’ of the very first Vera episode. Including a scene filmed in North Shields. I remember Joe scattering Hector’s ashes in the Tyne in one of the first scenes of the pilot episode. From the Shields Ferry as Vera watched him back at the North Shields fish quay. That’s a nice reminder of what Joe and Vera have been through together.

“I would say Vera is emotionally cut off. She keeps her emotions very close to her chest and keeps a lid on them. One of her great strengths is, perhaps, also one of her weaknesses in that she always presents as being incredibly strong and in control.

## INTERVIEW WITH DAVID LEON CONTINUED

“When sometimes she would do well to open up, talk about things and be a bit more free with her emotions.

“She can see the pain that Joe is going through and the turmoil. And can probably relate to the fact that work is a bit of a sanctuary for him. But there’s also a line which he crosses on one or two occasions when you can see the pressure building up and eventually getting to him. Vera doesn’t really know how to help. But there are some touching moments and conversations that reveal a little more about who they both are and what is really happening under the surface of their relationship, which I think is incredibly close. Vera has become a bit of a surrogate mother to him and he has become a bit of a surrogate son to her.”

**Q: Vera has a new face on her team in this series, DC Steph Duncan, played by Rhiannon Clements. What was it like working with her?**

“One of the things that is important to Joe is to help those who are next in line. To make sure they are given the support to fulfil their promise and potential. Steph is a great character and I had a lot of fun working with Rhiannon. There’s a beautiful ease to her. It’s also nice in terms of the dynamic between Joe and Vera because there is a contrast there.

“If Steph makes a mistake, he will come to her defence and try and resolve the situation. He takes his responsibility seriously. Joe might be there to oversee what Vera and her team are doing but, at the end of the day, he knows that Vera will always have their best interests at heart.”

**Q: This is the first series shot at the new production base at Killingworth. What has that given you?**

“Vera has moved on from some of the Swan Hunter shipbuilding buildings by the Tyne in Wallsend which we had used as the production studio base for a long time. It was incredible working there because you could feel the ghosts of the past. That sense of being somewhere that was so defining in terms of the history of the area. There were once thousands of men working there every day.

“The new production base has given us a slightly bigger footprint in terms of the overall studio size. So we have been able to open up the Vera world slightly more.”



## INTERVIEW WITH DAVID LEON CONTINUED

**Q: What are your thoughts about the fans who turn up to watch filming out on location?**

“It’s amazing that people turn up everywhere we go to watch filming. I always find it very surprising and incredibly touching that people have taken the show so much to their heart. It’s lovely to meet those people in person, face to face, and see the effect the show has on the audience. Because working on television is not like working on stage where you get an immediate response and reaction from an audience. So at times filming feels a bit disparate and detached. But when you see people up close and they talk about their love for the series, it brings it home. You realise the impact of your hard work.”

**Q: Vera tells Joe that she has adapted and not stood still. Could the same be said of the series over the course of what is now 54 feature length episodes?**

“There’s always a very fine balance between trying to stay true to the thing that audiences really respond to. The identity of the show. While also evolving and trying to stay fresh, current and surprising. To its great credit I think Vera has managed to do that. Also to Brenda’s great credit. She inspires me on a daily basis.

“The energy, enthusiasm and dedication to the work she brings sets the tone. Like the show, I think Brenda has managed to constantly reinvent, reinvigorate and find new levels of depth within the context of that character.

“I really enjoyed making these three new Vera films. There was a freshness to it that I wasn’t necessarily sure was going to be there. People say, ‘Never go back.’ And there is often good reason for that. You have to be careful to make those choices for all of the right reasons. It was always very important to me and also to the production team that there was a desire to ensure that if we did do this, there was going to be value in it for everyone and particularly for the audience. And it felt to me that we achieved that and I feel very satisfied by that.

“Working with Brenda comes very naturally. In terms of how it feels on set, how enjoyable it is and standing toe-to-toe, it has always been very enjoyable, challenging and rewarding. It does feel like jousting. You get the best out of each other when there is that level of challenge. But at the heart of it there’s great love and affection. I hold Brenda in the highest esteem and regard. I find her very inspiring both as an actor and as a person. She’s a very special woman.”

## INTERVIEW WITH DAVID LEON CONTINUED

### **Q: What's the future for Vera and Joe?**

“Vera will continue for as long as the demand for it remains and Brenda feels like she can continue to surprise herself and be challenged by it. She puts so much into it and it is an exhausting shoot. In the past usually filming four feature films back to back.

“The fans who come to watch filming are always amazed at the level of detail, craftsmanship and time each scene requires. It's a real challenge to make three or four feature length films back to back. It requires a level of energy and dedication that means you are just living in that bubble for several months. Your life gets put on hold. That's what it demands. I think one of the reasons Vera has endured is you have these films that usually drop at the beginning of the year and you are left as an audience wanting more. We'll just have to wait and see if there will be.”







## SYNOPSIS

### **EPISODE 1 - *Fast Love* by Paul Matthew Thompson**

DCI Vera Stanhope (Brenda Blethyn) is called to a quiet country lane where a young man has been found dead following a collision with a car. On closer inspection, it becomes clear that this is not an accident and is way more than a hit and run. Vera discovers that our victim is a popular market trader so heads down to his pitch to start to put together an idea of who our man is and ascertain why anyone would want him dead. As the investigation gathers pace, Vera learns that our cheeky chappy was a complex character. Antagonistic, arrogant and able to get what he wants, but did all of this come at a price? Secrets. Lies. Betrayal. Fractious relationships and intense rivalries but who would want our barrow boy buried. Meanwhile, a familiar face from the past turns up but what is their agenda?

### **EPISODE 2 – *Tender* by Phil Mulryne**

DCI Vera Stanhope (Brenda Blethyn) is on track to uncover an intriguing yet puzzling case when the body of a sickly young girl is discovered in a railway siding. Found in the middle of nowhere she could be anyone but the investigation soon turns up twists and turns that makes Vera question who this girl actually was. A vulnerable young person with a serious health condition, has her weakened state allowed someone to take advantage of her? And how does the family dynamic work when she's not truly part of the family? A tale of intrigue, betrayal and blurred lines, Vera's investigation questions the meaning of family, care and accountability. And with eroding trust, does care come at a cost?

### **EPISODE 3 - *Salt and Vinegar* by Phil Mulryne**

DCI Vera Stanhope (Brenda Blethyn) investigates when the body of the co-owner of a chip shop is found in his own freezer. A seemingly successful entrepreneur and dedicated family man, Vera uncovers secrets, lies and some unforgivable behaviour as she tries to unwrap the case. Once the investigation begins, it soon becomes apparent that our enigmatic entrepreneur has left behind debts, broken promises, ruined lives and seriously interfered in family business that was not his own. Who is responsible for this unsavoury chip shop assault and battery?

## AUTHOR ANN CLEEVES



Ann Cleeves is the author of more than thirty-five critically acclaimed novels, and in 2017 was awarded the highest accolade in crime writing, the CWA Diamond Dagger. She is the creator of popular detectives Vera Stanhope, Jimmy Perez and Matthew Venn, who can be found on television in ITV's Vera, BBC One's Shetland and ITV's The Long Call respectively. The TV series and the books they are based on have become international sensations, capturing the minds of millions worldwide. 2022 marks 30 years of publishing with Pan Macmillan.

Ann worked as a probation officer, bird observatory cook and auxiliary coastguard before she started writing. She is a member of 'Murder Squad', working with other British northern writers to promote crime fiction. Ann also spends her time advocating for reading to improve health and wellbeing and supporting access to books. In 2021 her Reading for Wellbeing project launched with local authorities across the North East. She lives in Northumberland where the Vera books are set.

You can find Ann on Twitter and Facebook [@AnnCleeves](#)

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## CAST CREDITS - EPISODE ONE

DCI Vera Stanhope.....BRENDA BLETHYN  
DI Joe Ashworth.....DAVID LEON  
DC Kenny Lockhart.....JON MORRISON  
DC Steph Duncan.....RHIANNON CLEMENTS  
DC Mark Edwards.....RILEY JONES  
Pathologist Dr. Paula Bennett.....SARAH KAMEELA IMPEY  
Danny Meddon.....TRAVIS ROSS  
Owen Duggan ..... PATRICK MCNAMEE  
Carol Sloane..... NIMMY MARCH  
Ian Headley..... ANDREW DUNN  
Milan Shah.....AMIT SHAH  
Leanne Barrie.....EVIE HARGREAVES



**CAST CREDITS - EPISODE ONE**

Tony Meddon .....STEPHEN LORD  
Basma Shah.....FARZANA DUA ELAHE  
Alun Barrie..... BRYAN DICK  
Kathy Barrie.....SAMANTHA SEAGER  
Alison Rahim.....SUSAN JAYNE-ROBINSON  
Neil Rahim..... BERUCE KHAN

# CAST CREDITS - EPISODE TWO

DCI Vera Stanhope.....	BRENDA BLETHYN
DI Joe Ashworth.....	DAVID LEON
DC Kenny Lockhart.....	JON MORRISON
DC Steph Duncan.....	RHIANNON CLEMENTS
DC Mark Edwards.....	RILEY JONES
Pathologist Dr. Paula Bennett.....	SARAH KAMEELA IMPEY
Gabi McSwain.....	EMILY KATHRYN
Helen Rushden.....	JULIA SAWALHA
Rosa Adeyemi.....	JOELLE DYSON
Lee Critchley.....	JAKE LOWE
Jonathon Rushden.....	REECE DOUGLAS
Darren Childs.....	STEVEN STOBBS

**CAST CREDITS - EPISODE TWO**

Tom Rushden.....FRASER JAMES  
Maia Scholes.....LYNN RODEN  
Deborah McSwain.....GILLIAN KEARNEY  
Matthew McSwain.....SHAUN DOOLEY  
Sian Jordan.....GABRIELLE GREEN  
Fiona Rushden.....BRIDGET MARUMO  
Jonah Green.....EUAN MACNAUGHTON



## CAST CREDITS - EPISODE THREE

DCI Vera Stanhope.....	BRENDA BLETHYN
DI Joe Ashworth.....	DAVID LEON
DC Kenny Lockhart.....	JON MORRISON
DC Steph Duncan.....	RHIANNON CLEMENTS
DC Mark Edwards.....	RILEY JONES
Pathologist Dr. Paula Bennett.....	SARAH KAMEELA IMPEY
Ross Simmons.....	LEE ARMSTRONG
Anthony Davidson .....	LEON ANNOR
Scott Rhodes.....	SCOTT TURNBULL
Rachel Lim.....	JASMINE BAYES
Trevor Armley.....	SHANE ATTWOOLL
Carrie Hawton.....	SCARLETT BROOKES
Tyler Hawton.....	TAREQ AL-JEDDAL

## CAST CREDITS - EPISODE THREE

Ollie Keeble.....RYAN MCKEN  
Pat Helliwell.....MIA SOTERIOU  
Sophie Jenson.....AOIFE KENNAN  
Heidi Stokes.....MARGARET JACKMAN  
Doctor Stanton.....KAY MILBOURNE  
Crystal Hawton.....LINDSAY BENNETT - THOMPSON

## PRODUCTION CREDITS

Executive Producers..... KATE BARTLETT  
.....WILL NICHOLSON  
Producer..... WILL NICHOLSON  
Writer Ep 1.....PAUL MATTHEW THOMPSON  
Writer Ep 2 & 3.....PHIL MULRYNE  
Director Ep 1.....CLAIRE WINYARD  
Director Ep 2.....JERMAIN JULIEN  
Director Ep 3.....PAUL GAY  
Director of Photography Ep 1.....CINDERS FORSHAW  
Director of Photography Ep 2.....DONNA WADE  
Director of Photography Ep 3.....SIMON RICHARDS  
Co-Producer.....FAHIMA CHOWDHURY



## PRODUCTION CREDITS

Production Executive.....ROSALYN HILL  
Script Editor.....LIAM J STRATTON  
Script Executive.....SOPHIE MITCHELL  
Casting Directors.....MAUREEN DUFF CDG AND GERTIE PYE  
Costume Designer.....CLAIRE WILSON  
Make up Designer.....NICHOLA BELLAMY  
Editors.....SIMON STARLING & ALEX KALMAKRIAN  
Composer.....BEN BARTLETT  
Location Manager.....ANDREW EDWARDS  
Production Designer.....PAUL BOOTH  
Art Director.....JONATHAN TOLSON



