



THE GREAT FIRE

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ANDREW BUCHAN, JACK HUSTON ROSE LESLIE, DANIEL MAYS, CHARLES DANCE, PERDITA WEEKS, OLIVER JACKSON-COHEN, AND ANTONIA CLARKE STAR IN *THE GREAT FIRE*, WRITTEN BY TOM BRADBY

“If this fire destroys London, it will be the end of my reign, and doubtless my life.....”

The story of humble baker Thomas Farriner and his fabled involvement in The Great Fire of London is coming to ITV this Autumn in new drama, *The Great Fire*.

Andrew Buchan (*Broadchurch*, *Garrow's Law*, *Nowhere Boy*) plays the role of Thomas in the 4 x 60 minute drama, produced by the makers of *Fleming* and *Mistresses*, Ecosse Films, and written by successful novelist Tom Bradby, ITN's Political Editor.

Inspired by the historical events of 1666 and with the decadent backdrop of King Charles II's court, *The Great Fire* focuses on the circumstances which led to the catastrophic fire, Thomas Farriner's family life at the bakery in Pudding Lane, the playboy King's extravagant lifestyle, and Farriner's complex relationship with his fictional sister in law, Sarah played by Rose Leslie (*Utopia*, *Game of Thrones*, *Downton Abbey*).

Jack Huston (*American Hustle*, *Boardwalk Empire*, *Parade's End*) plays the role of King Charles II and Diarist Samuel Pepys, a close confidante of the King who dared to tell him “he was consumed by the pursuit of pleasure”, is portrayed by Daniel Mays (*Mrs Biggs*, *Treasure Island*, *Public Enemies*). Pepys wife Elizabeth is played by Perdita Weeks (*The Invisible Woman*, *Flight of the Storks*).

Also starring is Oliver Jackson-Cohen (*Dracula*, *Mr Selfridge*, *World Without End*) as the King's brother, James Duke of York, Andrew Tiernan (*Ripper Street*, *Foyle's War*, *Prisoner's Wives*) as prisoner Vincent, a forgotten soul languishing in Newgate prison, and Antonia Clarke (*Lightfields*, *A Mother's Son*) as Frances Stewart who famously captured the King's heart.

The Great Fire will unfold over four consecutive days as the fire indiscriminately takes hold of the city and the people desperately attempt to overcome the flames. The episodes will capture the most prosperous city of its age as fire rages and engulfs dwellings and businesses like the bakery on Pudding Lane. Terrified and

bewildered, the people are thrown into chaos, and with each day they become increasingly desperate to seek safety away from the city.

Other key roles include Lord Denton, an emissary of the King's, played by Charles Dance (*Game of Thrones, Secret State, Strike Back*) whilst the Duke of Hanford, the most powerful Catholic nobleman in the land is played by David Schofield (*Da Vinci's Demons, Land Girls, The Shadow Line*) and Sonya Cassidy (*Vera, The Paradise, Endeavour*) stars as The Queen.

Douglas Rae (*Fleming, Mistresses, My Boy Jack*) and Lucy Bedford (*Mistresses, All About George, Lie with Me*) are the executive producers for Ecosse Films. The producer is Gina Cronk (*The White Queen, Tracy Beaker Returns, Wolfblood*) and the director is Jon Jones (*Lawless, Rogue, Mr Selfridge*).

"In 1666 London was the greatest city in the world with a population of 300,000. In just four days The Great Fire destroyed nearly half the city and threatened the monarchy. It's a fascinating premise for a drama and creates the perfect backdrop for Tom Bradby to be at his most creative." Said Douglas Rae.

Tom Bradby (*Shadow Dancer – film/novel, Blood Money, The God of Chaos - novels*) writes the first three episodes whilst episode four is co-written by Tom Bradby, Chris Hurford (*Doc Martin, Ashes to Ashes*) and Tom Butterworth (*Doc Martin, Ashes to Ashes*).

Filming took place in in Spring 2014 in Kent, Surrey, Oxfordshire and central London, when the sights and sounds of Europe's greatest metropolis in the 17th Century, Pudding Lane, the Palace of Whitehall, Pepy's dwelling, Fish Street Hill, Newgate Prison, Moorfields, and the River Thames were recreated for the drama. Pyrotechnics and special effects, as opposed to CGI, were used to create the fire sequences as London burns.

ITV Studios Global Entertainment will distribute The Great Fire worldwide.

FOREWORD

BY THE GREAT FIRE WRITER, TOM BRADBURY

I guess all writers are constantly on the hunt for big, brilliant ideas and I think I can get away with saying this drama is one because its inception had absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with me.

Everyone knows about the Great Fire of London. It lasted four days, burned our capital city more or less to the ground and was started in a bakery by some bloke called Farriner. So when Lucy Bedford, executive producer for Ecosse Films approached me to suggest a drama with an hour for each day, my first reaction was to double check that it really had never been done before.

Our producer Gina Cronk might now be able to explain why; fire, it turns out, doesn't look good in close up with CGI, so we had no choice but to build a replica of Seventeenth Century London out near Henley and then burn it down, child actors and all. Gina is currently in the Priory.

No, obviously that's a joke, but it is also true to say that *Towering Inferno II* is unlikely to be her next project. Given the challenges, I hope you'll agree she, the team and especially director Jon Jones did an amazing job. Jon was particularly keen to get the actors *right* into the fire. So any realism is purely intentional.

On that first approach a year or so back, Lucy said she had seen and admired the film I adapted from my own novel *Shadow Dancer* for James Marsh, but she was also interested to see what experiences I might be able to bring to bear from my day job. It didn't take me long to spot the many contemporary resonances, from the two royal brothers bound together by childhood tragedy, to the parlous state of government coffers, disillusionment with a foreign war and intense fear of a religious minority perceived by some as being hell bent on undermining society and the state.

I certainly feel some of my journalistic experience was put to use. I have been shot in a riot and know what that kind of fear and chaos feels like and long days spent in civil disorder in cities as diverse as Belfast and Jakarta have left me with a lifelong fear of crowds, particularly in circumstances when the green light for anarchy is flashing hard.

In short, it was an irresistible project. I think Charles II was one of our most interesting and charismatic monarchs and I remain fascinated at the way our republican experiment just seemed to peter out in exhaustion and boredom. And historical characters don't come more colourful and interesting than Samuel Pepys.

Of course, any writer embarking on this kind of project knows he or she is going to get asked; how much fact, how much fiction? I have a pretty simple, if not infallible, answer for this, whether in writing novels or for the screen, which is that I think the

true purpose of historical fiction is to inspire people to go and find the facts for themselves. That's the role it served for me as a child and I remain passionately devoted to it as a subject.

That said, my natural inclination, like any history student, is to try and keep as close to the facts as possible and I certainly believe that is true of this drama; Pepys *was* the first to warn the King of the dangers. Charles II and his brother *did* end up leading the attempt to beat back the fire and restore order to the city and the King did ride out to Moorfields to convince his fellow citizens that lynching Catholics was not the answer.

In the end, though, this is going to be judged on whether it works as drama. From a technical point of view, it was an interesting project. I asked myself many times whether it was really a thriller, a disaster movie or relationship drama and concluded that it would only really work if it were all three in equal measure. Its success is for you to judge, but it was a bold commission from ITV's senior execs and I admire them for that.

We were certainly blessed with our cast. The headline actors did a brilliant job and I am very grateful to them, but it is no surprise that so many Americans want to come and make drama here because we are blessed with great strength in depth. I particularly love the Sir Humphreys in *The Great Fire* and their confusion as to how much truth to tell to power.

My favourite moment comes in Episode Two when, on the royal barge, Hyde and the Lord Chancellor tell the King that they cannot possibly carry out his order to pull down houses because the exchequer cannot afford it. The Playboy King thinks about this for a moment and says simply 'do it.' But is he serious? Does he really mean it? Does *he* even think he means it?

Wrestling with the realities of power in the world of a more or less bankrupt but still absolute monarch is a drama all of its own, but I hope *The Great Fire* is full of many such moments and you enjoy watching it as much as I loved writing it.

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER DOUGLAS RAE

“It is an incredible undertaking to take on something as epic as this,” says *The Great Fire* executive producer Douglas Rae, founder of Ecosse Films.

“There have been documentaries on the fire before but never a drama because people thought, ‘This is far too difficult to do.’

“But that’s the great privilege of working in this industry. A great script and a hugely talented group of people who can make dreams happen.”

Douglas, whose previous credits include *Fleming*, *Mrs Brown*, *Mistresses* and *Nowhere Boy*, believes there is something for everyone in *The Great Fire*.

“You don’t need to be a historian to enjoy this drama. At its heart is a love story between a simple baker and a servant with other elements of conspiracy and political intrigue.

“You have the life of King Charles II under threat, diarist Samuel Pepys and a real thriller of a big event drama with a fantastic cast. It’s a compelling story.”

The initial inspiration for the series came from a member of the Ecosse team during her maternity leave.

“One of our executive producers Lucy Bedford was off having a baby and at home at the time of the Japanese Tsunami, watching it on rolling television news as it happened.

“She has also lived through 9/11, the London bombings, the London riots - it’s almost like a drama unfolding before your eyes.

“And she thought, ‘What big event in history like this has happened but there were no cameras or journalists? Wouldn’t it be interesting to take something like The Great Fire of London, one of the biggest disasters in the world, and give it almost a contemporary feel with a writer who really understands what happens in riots and disasters?’

“We had been talking to ITV News Political Editor Tom Bradby about doing a spy series and a political series. Then it suddenly clicked that, actually, this would be something of great appeal to him. Which it was.

“Tom’s job in TV news is to take quite complex information every day and distill it into a minute. He deals with the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and, indeed, royalty as a friend of Prince William and Prince Harry.

“So he recognised this as a universal story and knew exactly how people would behave in these circumstances.

“Tom knew a lot about it anyway but he spent around a year doing all the research. And as a brilliant journalist he knew exactly where to find the best information.

“What he has done is take five really compelling characters and shown how the fire impacted on their lives: Thomas Farriner (Andrew Buchan), the Pudding Lane baker; Sarah Farriner (Rose Leslie), his brother’s wife; King Charles II (Jack Huston), who is terrified of leaving his Palace; Lord Denton (Charles Dance), the King’s protector playing, effectively, a mixture of Thomas Cromwell, Machiavelli and Alastair Campbell - and then Samuel Pepys, played by Daniel Mays.

“What we’ve tried to do is not to cast predictable, stereotypical actors. We didn’t want it to feel like a nice, polite, reverential period drama. We wanted actors who would really surprise people.”

A huge investment was made in both filming at historical locations and creating replicas of the streets of London and the river Thames.

“Pudding Lane, where the fire began, is still there. I went up to the top of The Shard to see it all. London was, of course, a lot smaller in 1666 but it was the largest city in the world even then.

“One of the biggest challenges was recreating the scale of London in a way that was convincing. We initially looked at filming in places like York, which has streets of this period. But it’s one little part of the city and you would have had to close it down for a month.

“So we decided to build London with Dominic Hyman, the incredibly clever production designer whose previous credits include *Rome*. In the space of four months he reconstructed a very convincing Pudding Lane and the streets nearby, along with the Thames and so on.

“We also made the decision to work with real fire rather than rely on CGI. So we actually have the fire, smoke and cinders right in front of the cameras with the actors.

“The main fire sets were built just outside Henley. It’s a great thing to have as a producer. You spend a lot of money on a set - and then burn it down!

“Some of the sets were built with fire bars and gas pipes running through them. We had a big control panel like a spaceship to choose exactly where would go up in flames. You get a whoosh of flames.

“Then right at the end of filming we burned the whole set down with several cameras running and lots of fingers crossed.”

Adds Douglas: "We also filmed in several historic locations in and around London including The Painted Hall in Greenwich, which is one of the greatest rooms in the world, Dorney Court for Pepys' London house and the House of Detention at Clerkenwell for Newgate Prison.

"The House of Detention was a very spooky place to film in. You could almost hear the ghosts screaming. And as we filled it all with smoke you could get a feel of the claustrophobic panic there would have been facing that fire."

In one scene a horrified King Charles II watches as the flames reach the original St Paul's Cathedral.

"The Cathedral was made of wood, as was most of London. That was such a symbol of Christian worship. So to see God's house being reduced to ruins must have left the people very demoralised.

"We also recreated the massive refugee camp that was established at Moor Fields. It must have been almost a biblical sight."

Specialist fire-fighters and medics were on set throughout filming with the cast and crew given safety briefings at the start of each day.

"Yet, as ever, the script is everything and the fire scenes always relate to what is happening to our characters and their relationships," explains Douglas.

"You can play around with special effects all you like but unless you have that emotional investment in the people on screen, it doesn't work."

BAFTA-award winning and Oscar nominated Sheena Napier was in charge of costume design.

"Sheena is one of the finest costume designers in the country. For example, she had a royal ball costume made for one of the cast members which was actually cut by the main cutter to the late, legendary dressmaker Jean Muir, who was known for her amazingly elegant gowns."

Smoke drifts over a Thames wharf as Douglas surveys the cast and crew at work in a scene which looks like they have all been transported back to 1666 - with cameras looking on.

"I think viewers recognise and enjoy drama with a captivating story made with huge care and skill by all involved," he reflects.

"And *The Great Fire* is certainly that."



ANDREW BUCHAN IS THOMAS FARRINER

“What surprised me the most about *The Great Fire* is how terrifying it is to film and how frightening it must have been,” explains Andrew Buchan.

“Although it shouldn’t come as a surprise. The clue is in the title. But it really has. We have thrown ourselves wholeheartedly into a very scary story.”

Broadchurch star Andrew plays Thomas Farriner, owner of the Pudding Lane bakery which sparked The Great Fire of London in 1666.

“He made loaves, pies and pastries and also baked ship’s biscuit, which was the lemon biscuit for the Navy. So because of that he became known as the King’s baker, although he wasn’t as such.

“There are no frills to Thomas Farriner. He is a very humble, modest, honest working man who cares for his family a great deal and just goes about his everyday business – until the fire.

“In our story he is a widower with daughters Hannah and Mary and also looks out for his sister-in-law Sarah and young nephew David.”

Andrew knew he wanted to be involved in *The Great Fire* from the moment he read the scripts.

“My first reaction was, ‘I know very little about this and I ought to know a lot more than I do as it’s such a large part of our history.’

“I discovered a lot of family, friends and random members of the public seemed to know a lot more about it than I did, asking me things like, ‘Does Samuel Pepys bury his cheese?’ How did they know all of this?

“From a primary school perspective, The Great Fire of London seems to have been wrapped up in a neat little bundle of a tale. Which could not be further from the truth. Because when you investigate further, it is a horrifying, terrifying story.

“The writer Tom Bradby has included so many relevant and factual elements to this story. The things that really did happen in London back then. From the Mayor Sir Thomas Bloodworth, at first, virtually ignoring the fire to Pepys burying his cheese and the Farriners having to escape out of their window on to a neighbour’s roof.

“All of that is historically correct and part of a staggering story of the firestorm. Along with fears of a Catholic plot against the King as part of the conspiracy theories. Or was it, as the Parliamentary committee said later, ‘The hand of God upon us, a great wind and the season so very dry’?

“Tom’s scripts are beautifully written and I like the fact it’s such a human story about the relationships of all the characters. I also get to meet Samuel Pepys, played by the brilliant Danny Mays.”

Andrew decided to do some personal research after he got the role.

“I had a walk around the City of London, which is actually a relatively small area. I’ve gone past so many sites there before which I now realise hold a huge treasure chest of history.

“Most of the streets in 1666 were so narrow and tiny with the buildings crowded together. Then you think of them having timber frames. A fire there must have been nothing short of hell.”

One part of the drama sees Thomas struggling to help others escape from Newgate Prison as the flames threaten to kill them all.

“It was probably three of the hardest days’ filming I’ve ever done. Newgate was completely destroyed in the fire so we filmed those scenes in dungeons at Clerkenwell.

“They are like huge vaults. And then you start pumping them with smoke. It’s insanely hot, your vision is limited, you can’t breathe and you’re coughing all the time. As you would be when you were not holding your breath. It was a really gruelling three days.”

Firefighters were on standby during filming of spectacular scenes involving real flames with huge sets depicting the City of London burned to the ground.

“When I first spoke to the director Jon Jones, I said, ‘So how are we going to film this? Will it be green screen or CGI?’ He replied. ‘No, we’re really going to set it all on fire.’ Amazing.”

There is a spark of a different kind between Thomas and his sister-in-law Sarah (Rose Leslie), who works alongside him in the bakery.

"His brother, her husband, has gone away to fight in the war but they have had no news of him. They don't know if he is dead or missing in action.

"So even though there is that spark between them, there's nothing that can be done about it. It's tricky. They are working in such close proximity every day but Thomas wants to do the right thing. The honourable thing. And they both know that."

Andrew and co-star Rose went to a real life bakery to ensure their baking skills looked authentic on screen.

"I have got some previous experience," he smiles. "I used to work in a pizza restaurant in Bolton. All the dough was made fresh on the premises and we had to do all of that. You had to be trained in everything - be it waitering, pot washing or making the pizzas.

"You have to be pretty fit working as a baker day in, day out. So I had a few hours in the gym to step up the upper body strength before we started filming."

The Great Fire highlights the lives of London's 17th century residents, from ordinary poor working people to the King and the royal court.

"Most of the ordinary working people lost everything they had in the fire and you realise just how much they suffered. You also wonder how on Earth they managed to rebuild their lives after this disaster."

The fire swept through London for four days, destroying a large part of the City.

"The main method of fighting fire at this time was by creating fire breaks to prevent it from spreading. You don't give it any more fuel to gorge on. Just cut it off. But that also involves destroying people's homes and businesses.

"There was a desperation to pin the blame along with hostility towards Thomas Farriner and mob violence with a breakdown of law and order.

Adds Andrew: "I don't think this story has been told in a TV drama before so it will be revealing for viewers. There are so many angles to what is a truly fascinating story."

Andrew's credits include: *The Honourable Woman*; *Having You*; *Broadchurch*; *Garrow's Law*; *The Nativity*; *Cranford*; *Nowhere Boy*; *The Fixer*; *Party Animals*; *Jane Eyre*.



JACK HUSTON IS KING CHARLES II

“The truth is, everyone indulges me, so I indulge myself.”

King Charles II, played by Jack Huston, confides in Samuel Pepys (Daniel Mays) about his life in the royal court.

“You can imagine that to be very true,” says Jack. “But after a while it would become tiresome and you would get bored.

“When you can have everything and are surrounded by affluence, people bowing and anything you say they agree with, I think that would be an incredibly dull life.

“It takes something as tragic as The Great Fire wiping out most of London to bring the King out of his shell.”

Charles II was known as the Merry Monarch who only cared for his own pleasure.

But behind the high spending, womanising, hedonistic lifestyle was the fear he might one day be assassinated, with the shadow of history hanging over his reign.

“His father Charles I was executed by Oliver Cromwell at the end of the English Civil War.

“Charles fled and lived in exile in France and elsewhere, where people were actually rather cruel to him. He lived incredibly modestly with a few people for several years before Cromwell’s death.

“Then he was brought back to England and placed on the throne in the restoration of the monarchy.

"He lived in court as a rather debauched man of pleasure. But he was always very conscious of the fate of his father. And the views of his people.

"He was a Protestant, whereas his brother James and their mother were Catholics.

"Charles understood England was a Protestant country and he had to stay devout to the Protestant religion in order to be accepted by the people. Otherwise he could have been dethroned.

"He's very scared. Seeing your father executed when you are 18 years old would leave a mark. It would forever scar you. I think you'd be incredibly conscious and wary of the people and the power of the people.

"For him, making a wrong decision wasn't just that. He feared it could lead to his possible execution.

"He was always very afraid of the mob. So he thought by turning a blind eye, stepping back and letting other people deal with it, that was the easiest way to stay alive."

Boardwalk Empire star Jack adds: "I always enjoyed history at school and found it one of the more compelling subjects.

"You can't help enjoy history because it's like an action adventure novel. So much happens! And this is quite an event.

"It's fun being in a drama which is so historic and important to London.

"But to also go into some depth and really discover what it was all about. All the different people involved and the various factions.

"As the fire spread it was the first time Charles really had to make some decisions. He had to pull his finger out, step up and become the King that he actually later was.

"When you're tested by something like The Great Fire, you realise doing nothing could be equally as detrimental as doing something.

"It was the moment where they said, 'Actually now you have to act like a King. You have to ride out. You have to see your people. You have to show that you care.'

"And he did that. He did ride out and he did face the mob. It's an amazing turning point. There's a wonderful journey for Charles."

Light floods through the windows of The Painted Hall at the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich as Jack shoots a scene where the King is updated on the progress of the fire.

"Amazing historic locations like this instantly transport you back in time," he explains in a break from filming.

"You are transformed into that period and it all adds to the top quality of the drama."

BAFTA-award winning and Oscar-nominated Sheena Napier is in charge of the costumes. "Sheena has done the most incredible job. It all feels very authentic."

As do the spectacular fire scenes depicting the massive blaze which the King initially failed to realise threatened the entire capital.

"There were small fires the whole time in London. It was not an uncommon thing. So when Pepys warned the King this blaze was a little out of control, I think the King dismissed it.

"He was startled when he realised the full scale of the fire. Imagine seeing the flames reaching St Paul's Cathedral?

"It's utter disbelief. He had no idea that was possible. It would be truly shocking."

Jack's credits include: *American Hustle*; *Boardwalk Empire*; *Night Train to Lisbon*; *Kill Your Darlings*; *Parade's End*; *The Twilight Saga: Eclipse*.



ROSE LESLIE IS SARAH FARRINER

The full scale of *The Great Fire* became clear to Rose Leslie when she took a walk around the 21st century City of London.

“It’s an incredible event to think of now. Imagine that happening today? Most of the City consumed by fire, including St Paul’s Cathedral?” she reflects.

“Such a terrifying thing because there was nothing you could do faced with such a ferocious fire so high and wide, with the wind fanning the flames. You are absolutely helpless. It must have been a horrible sight.

“Also back then they thought the burning down of what was the original St Paul’s must have been the wrath of God. They had all wronged and were not doing His duty. They felt they had no power at all because it was in His hands.”

Game Of Thrones actress Rose plays Sarah Farriner, sister-in-law to Pudding Lane baker Thomas Farriner (Andrew Buchan) and mother to David (Joey Price), aged 10.

“She is a single parent as her sailor husband Will - Thomas’s brother - has been missing for 15 months. His ship sank at the Battle of Lowestoft and although there were some survivors she hasn’t heard any word from him.

“Sarah is holding on to a glimmer of hope that he might be among the survivors but she isn’t getting anywhere in trying to get information from the Navy about his fate. She is waiting to find out if he is dead or alive.”

Rose recalled her school days when she read Tom Bradby’s scripts for *The Great Fire*.

“The first thing that flashed up in my mind was I remembered St Paul’s Cathedral - as it was then - being burned down. And that was the only thing I remembered! And

the fact there were homes on the bridges over the Thames, which fascinated me when I was young.

"Tom Bradby's scripts are amazing. I loved his past work and so was very excited to read these scripts. It's very clever how he has weaved the story of the fire with all the different characters involved. And I think viewers will relate to the Farriners.

"Sarah is devoted to her son and fiercely protective of him. So while she is kind and gentle, she doesn't cower in any way, which was an attribute I loved. It's quite something to be, effectively, a single mother bringing up a child in what could be a brutal world.

"She is very easy to warm to. A talented, intelligent young lady who is a maid and seamstress in a nobleman's household while also helping out at the bakery.

"I'm not great at cooking but I do love baking. I'm better at the muffins, cupcakes and biscuits than the more complicated recipes. We also had some baking lessons before we started filming those scenes to make it look like we knew what we were doing."

Ordinary London citizens like Sarah had little to call their own.

"Life was very hard in 1666. She has few possessions and pretty much one outfit to wear. That does help you as an actor. There's a transition as you put on the costume and then feel settled into who she is."

With husband Will's fate unknown, Sarah and his brother Thomas are drawn together.

"Thomas is very different to the man she married. He is there to look after both her and her young son, providing that paternal voice and figure for him. But she is still a married woman."

Sarah also attracts the attention of Lord Denton, the 17th century equivalent of a spymaster for King Charles II, always on guard for plots against the throne.

"At first she thinks he is simply someone from her local church who wants to create a friendship with her - and perhaps more. Then he shows his true colours."

Lord Denton is played by *Game Of Thrones* co-star Charles Dance.

"Charles Dance is phenomenal at playing the terrifying, daunting character that Denton is. So it's very much to Sarah's credit that she is not intimidated by him and fights back against him. It's a very interesting relationship between those two characters."

As the London inferno spreads, so does the need to find someone to blame, with Sarah's employer, the Duke of Hanford suspected of being involved in a Catholic Papist plot against the King.

Fearing for the life of her son, Sarah is forced to help Denton in his ruthless quest to foil any threat to the Crown.

"It's like there is a cauldron bubbling away inside her. Sarah feels she is either going to lose her son or lose her own life. It's a struggle for survival."

At one stage Sarah is thrown into a prison cell - a woman alone with a group of male inmates.

"That's absolutely terrifying for her with no way out. When we filmed it I was thrown into this cell and surrounded by around 20 men who were all told to get up and walk towards me.

"Even though we're acting my stomach was churning because it felt evil and wrong. You also feel very insignificant and vulnerable. It wasn't a particularly pleasant day.

"We filmed at the House of Detention in Clerkenwell, which was dark and damp. There was something very unsettling about it and obviously the horrors that happened there centuries ago. Just this aura of unhappiness.

"I also felt a chill - and I don't think I was the only one. There was very much a presence. So many lost souls still trapped there. So after filming was completed it was like, 'OK, can we please get out of here now?'"

Has Sarah ever experienced a major fire in real life?

"Fortunately not. But when I was younger I was obsessed with having the candle flame in front of me and the fact that you could drift your fingers through the flame and not get hurt.

"But, of course, fire is so dangerous and we used a lot of real fire and flames in filming the drama. We also couldn't wait to shoot the scenes where they lit up the whole set. It was spectacular.

"I wasn't worried at all about filming those scenes as safety is always paramount. The health and safety people kept a close eye on all of us so there was never any danger of anyone being hurt. Plus we worked with wonderful stunt doubles.

"Andrew Buchan and I were also 'grubbed up' in our messy costumes so it was fascinating to see the other side - the beautiful, regal outfits of the King and Queen and the ladies of the royal court. As dirty scrubbers it was exciting to see the clean world!"

Rose played housemaid Gwen Dawson in the first series of *Downton Abbey* and went on to portray Ygritte in *Game Of Thrones*.

“I feel nothing but the most lucky girl in the world to have been a part of those two shows and now *The Great Fire*.

“Thinking back to that walk around the City of London - I couldn’t resist going to see the Monument to the fire. It was wonderful to finally get a true perspective of the area and what had happened there.

“Also to see Pudding Lane is still there and know that’s where it all started. You could almost step back in time and imagine yourself in 1666. Then you look the other way and see the ‘new’ St Paul’s Cathedral. All from the ruins of the fire. Incredible.”

Rose’s previous credits include: *Utopia*; *Game of Thrones*; *Blandings*; *Vera*; *Case Histories*; *Downton Abbey*.



DANIEL MAYS IS SAMUEL PEPYS

Portraying one of England's most famous sons was not a job Daniel Mays took lightly.

"It's a big deal playing Samuel Pepys. Everyone has a preconceived idea about him and there's a level of expectation," he explains.

"In previous dramas he's been played quite tongue in cheek, a bit bawdy. But we haven't focused so much on that.

"This is a grittier, meatier take on Pepys. I just have to go with the fantastic scripts that writer Tom Bradby has produced. The fact that Tom is also the ITV News Political Editor means he is able to lift the lid on the political aspect of it."

Mrs Biggs star Daniel plays the 17th century diarist who helped modernise the Royal Navy as Clerk of the Acts to the Navy Board and later an MP and Chief Secretary to the Admiralty.

"We meet him at a point where his marriage to Elizabeth, played by Perdita Weeks, is near breaking point. They are at a low ebb.

"Pepys is fiercely ambitious and driven to succeed but he neglects his marriage. So it's partly a story of a long-term marriage going sour and his infidelities.

"He loved Lizzie passionately and yet they did sometimes have a very tempestuous, troubled marriage. When we come to them in the story they're just not on the same page and not listening to each other.

"At times he acts in a deplorable manner. He has an arrangement that he can sleep with the wife of a man who works in the Navy office. It's despicable but people in a

position of power back then were able to do that. While the husband is using his wife for self gain.

"You also have to remember there was no such thing as divorce in those times. So if you were in a stale or loveless marriage you would take up a mistress.

"He is a conundrum because he also has an enormous capacity for jealousy as well. For example when he sees his wife in a dance lesson with another man."

Daniel's son Mylo helped his dad with some of his research into *The Great Fire*.

"My son had studied it at school and he came to Dorney Court, neat Windsor, which doubles as Pepys' London home, and loved going around the house.

"I also read Claire Tomalin's biography of Pepys - *The Unequalled Self* - which was a fantastic book to start with. That was the first port of call.

"But, of course, with Pepys you've got the diary. So in terms of an actor preparing for a role, what else better to have than somebody's diary accounts over the course of 10 years?

"I started reading them and then downloaded Kenneth Branagh reading them. So I've got Ken Branagh rolling around in my head constantly.

"It's probably the most important document we have in literature to tell us how things were back then because he writes both about his private life and the momentous events of the time in London.

"There's a huge level of detail and insight into his life, how he worked and his infidelities. You get this real sense of somebody who loved London and loved to celebrate. He loved theatre, dining and celebration.

"He came from humble beginnings. His dad was a tailor and it was his uncle who gave him the rung up the ladder to move up and he went to Cambridge.

"He strikes me as someone who seized upon every opportunity that came his way. Pepys desperately wanted to make his mark in the world. And he certainly did."

Does Daniel keep a diary?

"No," he smiles. "I used to keep a diary when I was at primary school and then it got nicked from my bag by two classmates I should name and shame! I saw them reading it and that was it. I stopped writing one from that point on.

"It's a discipline to keep a diary. Some people do it in case they forget things. It's good to have a record of events that have happened but I haven't got the time."

Sitting by the Thames in the regal surroundings of Greenwich, Daniel presents a striking 17th century figure in long wig and costume.

“When you are cast you try and imagine how it is going to be. But the moment you put this gear on it helps transform you into character. The fact there are no pockets, for starters. So you instinctively stand differently. And what do you do with your hands?

“Then you see the locations and sets, including The Painted Hall here at the Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich, which is magnificent. Plus how they’ve re-created the City of London on spectacular sets at Henley.

“There are also scenes on the Thames. Pepys went everywhere via the river. The oarsmen of the rowing boats were the equivalent of a London cabby today.”

Pepys played with fire of a different kind in his attempt to win the ear of King Charles II (Jack Huston) by telling him the truth about public opinion.

“He was the playboy King who hid from his people. It’s a hugely brave thing for Pepys to do. His head is on the block, literally, if it all goes wrong.

“Reading his diaries, Pepys was highly critical of the King. What he was writing in the diary was an act of treason in some respects if that had been found and placed into the wrong hands.”

Pepys aims to win the trust of the monarch as they play a game of Pall Mall.

“I didn’t know it but it’s like a game of croquet. You have to hit the ball through a hoop but there are also raised targets as well. That resembles a golf shot where you have to chip the ball up.

“The camera crew had to film me hitting a ball on to a stump down the end of the pitch and we thought it might take some time. But I did it on take three, so it was fine. It felt like a hole in one!

“That’s a great scene with Jack Huston because, yes, they are playing a game with each other but it’s also like a power play with Pepys advising him and waiting to see how he will react.”

Adds Daniel: “When the fire raged, Pepys was the one who went out on a boat to measure the scale of it. He advised the King to pull houses down to create a fire break. So he played a big role in preventing the further spread of the blaze.

“I went to the top of The Shard on a day off from filming and looking down you could see the Monument to the fire and how far the whole thing spread to St Paul’s Cathedral.

"It was a real period of terror. Reports of a Papist plot against the King fuelled the paranoia and we see that in the drama. People were fleeing, desperately grabbing their possessions. Hopefully that level of panic will come across on screen."

He concludes: "*The Great Fire* has assembled a wonderful ensemble of actors. It's an amazing story with so many different strands and a thriller aspect.

"Yes, it's entertaining. But it's also intriguing and enlightening for us as well. I'm really surprised it's not been tackled before in a film or TV drama."

Daniel's credits include: *Welcome to the Punch*; *Mrs Biggs*; *Byzantium*; *Treasure Island*; *Public Enemies*; *Doctor Who*; *Outcasts*; *Made in Dagenham*.



CHARLES DANCE IS LORD DENTON

Real flames burning bright in the night were all part of the job for the cast of *The Great Fire*.

“Sparks begin to fly,” smiles Charles Dance, who plays Lord Denton, the King’s ruthless intelligence officer.

“But it’s very well controlled. All the special effects guys know exactly what they are doing and we were never in any danger.”

Huge sets depicting the City of London in 1666 were built for the series, with some burned to the ground.

Walking around the crowded alleyways of homes, pubs and tradesmen’s premises, strewn with washing lines, barrels, baskets and carts, you can see how the blaze would take hold.

“We have wonderful production designers in this country and Dominic Hyman has done the most fantastic job on this. It just looks utterly authentic.

“Houses at that time were made from timber, wattle and daub. Not much brickwork. Which is why the fire spread so quickly.

“The night the fire started was the hottest night of the year and there was a strong wind blowing. So, whoosh, off it went - very quickly. It hadn’t rained for a long time so everything was dry.”

Charles is a man in black as Lord Denton, standing by the banks of the Thames full of people in rowing boats with smoke swirling all around.

"Denton is a fictional character but is based on real people at the time. He is, effectively, Head of Security for King Charles II, played by Jack Huston. Or you could say the equivalent today of the head of MI5.

"There was a real need for that because the monarchy was not safe. Despite the fact it had been invited back - the Restoration of the Monarchy. There was the continual fear the Catholics would come in and unseat Charles II, a Protestant King, and put a Catholic in his place.

"So there was a requirement for massive security and conspiracy theories abounded. Not least when *The Great Fire* rages and it's suspected of being a Papist plot against the King.

"Denton worked for King Charles I before he had his head chopped off. So he is very loyal to the Crown and protective of the monarchy."

Life could be brutal in 17th century London, especially if Denton saw you as the enemy.

"It was a very violent time and torture was part of everyday life. That was how you got information out of people if they didn't come clean."

At one point Denton admits: "There is no warmth in being the object of such fear."

Game Of Thrones star Charles explains: "The point about somebody in that position at that time was that you could not afford to get close to anybody. Because you might let things slip and allow your emotions get in the way of a job that largely has to be unemotional.

"I gather the SAS prefer not to have married people because it means their mind is elsewhere. So there's a big chunk of their emotional life that is never exercised or kept under cover. And Denton also has to bury that side of him."

Does Charles see any redeeming qualities in Denton?

"It's redeeming in as much as he believes absolutely in what he is doing. In his mind it's highly likely there is a Catholic plot against the King and that is a very dangerous situation indeed. Denton is determined that any plot will not succeed.

"So 'nice' is not a word you would apply to Denton. I don't mind playing these characters. I just like working, really. If something is well written, then I'll do it. I don't care whether he's a good guy or a bad guy. But more often than not the bad guys are more entertaining."

One of the unlucky souls to fall under Lord Denton's gaze is Sarah Farriner (Rose Leslie), sister-in-law of Pudding Lane baker Thomas Farriner (Andrew Buchan).

“Denton appears at first to be quite sweet on her and introduces himself as Edward Wickes. Obviously if you’re working for MI5, you don’t use your real name,” laughs Charles.

But events soon spiral out of control and Sarah is caught up in Denton’s quest to foil any threat to his royal master.

“The fire started in Thomas Farriner’s baker’s shop but the situation that writer Tom Bradby is suggesting is highly plausible. The script is written by somebody who knows what they’re talking about.

“It’s important that aside from the spectacle of the fire we concentrate on the characters and their relationships. Otherwise you’re going to make a documentary.

“So you create a convincing storyline set against the backdrop of a factual event. Those two elements, if they’re done properly, work very well and give the drama substance.”

Charles is among those surprised The Great Fire of London has never been made into a film or TV drama before.

“*The Great Fire* is a bloody good drama. Quite a thing to pull off when you are really setting the sets alight. It’s really well written, moves at a pace and at the end of each episode you want to see what happens next.

“It must have been a very shocking thing to witness at the time, especially as the wind helped the flames reach St Paul’s Cathedral.

“A huge disaster with a fascinating story behind it.”

Charles’s credits include: *Game of Thrones*; *Viy*; *Secret State*; *Strike Back*; *St George’s Day*; *Underworld: Awakening*; *Your Highness*; *There Be Dragons*; *Ironclad*.



OLIVER JACKSON-COHEN IS JAMES, DUKE OF YORK

Writer Tom Bradby's scripts for *The Great Fire* explore the relationship between royal brothers in 1666.

With cast and crew aware of his modern day royal connections.

"Tom is friendly with Prince William and Prince Harry," explains Oliver Jackson-Cohen, who plays King Charles II's (Jack Huston) brother James, Duke of York.

"We talked to our director Jon Jones about the loss of a parent and how that bonds siblings together."

Charles and his younger brother James were teenagers when their father King Charles I was executed at the end of the English Civil War.

"They become the parents for each other. They are the mother and the father. So that's very much what we're doing here."

Mr Selfridge star Oliver continues: "Being in the royal family could be quite dangerous back then. Their father had been killed so James and Charles look after each other.

"But a lot is going on behind the scenes as the fire rages through London. Charles is a Protestant King of a Protestant country while James is a Catholic.

"Is James planning to have his brother murdered or deposed as part of a Papist plot? It's such a fearful time and makes for high drama.

"Tom's scripts are very cleverly constructed with the story, as with the fire, happening over four days.

"I also love the way it cuts between royalty at the Palace to what's happening on the streets. Hopefully we've made a great drama."

London-born Oliver - whose father is French - went to a French school in the capital when he was growing up.

"I was away working on a film when I was offered the role in this so had just six days before filming started on *The Great Fire*.

"That's when I suddenly realised I knew hardly anything about it. Aside from the fact it involved Charles II and a fire that destroyed a whole part of London. That was it.

"So I locked myself in a library and did six days of intense research, finding everything I could about the fire and that period.

"When I heard about the production I thought, 'It's great they're doing that again.' But then I discovered there hasn't been a previous film or TV drama.

"It's an incredible story and I can't believe it hasn't been done before. Very surprising."

With Charles reluctant to show his face on the streets of London, James rides out to see the scale of the fire and organise attempts to control it.

"We used real fire during filming but that wasn't a worry as they were very strict with health and safety.

"I was more concerned about riding horses, which I'm terrified of. And riding horses through fire. I have ridden on screen before but I have mini panic attacks when I get on a horse.

"I grew up terrified of horses. They're like giant five-year-olds that can kill you. So it's something to be scared of. You also have to trust that you're going to be able to stop a horse."

The Great Fire follows the lives of Londoners from a humble baker to the King.

"There was a massive gap between the life of the royals and the ordinary people in the street.

"The fire finally shattered that veil of illusion that the King was in his Palace and everything was fine.

"Religion also ruled everything back then. It was a way of life, a true belief. Every single thing you did was dictated by religion."

Oliver certainly looks the part in his royal robes and flowing wig. “It takes about 40 minutes to have the wig pinned in and then basically super-glued to my face,” he laughs.

“It all completely helps in playing the character. These people were peacocks. It was all about everything being lavish, which for royalty then was even more excessive.

“The locations have also been incredible. Most of the time you either go abroad to shoot a period drama or they build sets.

“So to actually film in and around London in these amazing real places is fantastic. It also looks brilliant on screen because we’re talking about authentic historic buildings.

“I do genuinely feel we have made something exciting with a brilliant story. The story is cleverly interwoven and with great, well-rounded characters.

“There is something for everyone. Including Charles Dance as Lord Denton. You don’t want to mess with him.

“The really bizarre thing is I was working with Charles on the film *Despite The Falling Snow* before we came straight on to *The Great Fire*.”

Adds Oliver: “I was walking through Piccadilly the other day and the roof of a cinema was on fire. I thought, ‘This is a sign.’

“And, yes, I have double checked all my smoke detectors at home.”

Oliver’s credits include: *Dracula*; *Mr Selfridge*; *World Without End*; *The Raven*; *What’s Your Number*; *Lark Rise to Candleford*.

THE GREAT FIRE CHARACTER BIOGRAPHIES

THOMAS FARRINER

A rugged, handsome man who used to be proud to say he is one of the King's Bakers. He is now struggling to keep his bakery business afloat and support his two children as a single father. Thomas is solid and dependable and would never admit to struggling - but somehow always holds back from fighting for what he really desires. He's close to his sister-in-law, Sarah. And though he doesn't quite see it, being around her is the best part of his day...

SARAH

Thomas' sister-in-law. Her husband, Will Farriner is a navy man who has been missing for nearly two years but she refuses to give up hope of his return. Or indeed to even contemplate moving on romantically. She is poor, living in a tiny room with her son David, and the struggles she's endured means she's no pushover. Like Thomas, she can't quite see that the crackle between them is chemistry...

LORD DENTON

The King's Intelligence Chief. He uses his alias, Edward Wickes, to infiltrate potential plots against the King. He is a highly trained professional who tracks his prey like a shark moving in for the kill. But this staunch loyalty and rigid belief in the overall good of his work belies the damaged heart at the core of this man.

SAMUEL PEPYS

The great Diarist, he is bookish and not what you might call a "man's man". Quick thinking, straight talking, and ambitious, he's primed to manoeuvre into the King's inner-circle of trusted individuals - knowing this will elevate his social status. And kicks this off over a game of Pall Mall with the King. However the strength of his ambition means that the relationship with his wife, Elizabeth, suffers.

JAMES, DUKE OF YORK

As the King's brother James, Duke of York is heir to the English thrown and a man devoted by faith. He is confident, handsome and pragmatic – understanding all too well the dangers his brother faces, the country's current instability and persistent lack of funds in the royal treasury.

KING CHARLES II

Handsome, charming, he leads an opulent, extravagant lifestyle drinking and womanising. A man who has everything and would much rather lose himself in excess than face up to the truth that he's terrified he will fall victim of a plot and executed like his father, Charles I. Though he doesn't realise it, what he needs is to be challenged to become a strong leader. And the Great Fire of London will do just that...

THE GREAT FIRE SYNOPSIS

Episode 1



It's the summer of 1666. Thomas Farriner is the King's baker, supplying bread and biscuit for the Navy, who are currently at war. A widower and single-father, Thomas works alongside his daughters Mary and Hannah, with a little help from his sister-in-law, Sarah Farriner, in his Pudding Lane bakery.

Times are hard and Sarah's wayward husband (and Thomas' brother) has been missing at sea for many months. Although she's unable to move on, there's no denying the crackle between Thomas and Sarah as she departs to prepare for the return of her employer, the Duke of Hanford.

Thomas heads off with the Navy delivery and when he arrives at the Navy yards, it quickly becomes clear he's not going to be paid for all the work he's done. Thomas discusses his lack of payment with Navy official Samuel Pepys and is dismayed to learn there is no hope of payment due to the expense of the war. However, Pepys is able to help Thomas in another way and he sends him away with a letter confirming the fate of Will Farriner.

Across the city in the palace of Whitehall, the King is at a stately dance, enjoying his many spoils and women in full view of his wife, the Queen. Amidst the reverie a terrifying assassination attempt is foiled by the King's Intelligence Officer, Lord Denton. Under interrogation, the assassin reveals he's a Catholic fanatic and a former employee of Sarah's boss, the Duke of Hanford, who Denton has under

surveillance. Is there some kind of larger Catholic plot in the works? The King registers concern but surprisingly his brother, James Duke of York, stands up for Hanford.

Samuel Pepys enjoy a game of Pall Mall with the King but returns home to find his wife Elizabeth with her dance teacher. Jealous and hurt, he slips away to visit a prostitute.

At the bakery, a troubled Thomas leaves his daughter Hannah in charge and heads to his sister-in-law with a heavy heart. Meanwhile, Sarah is visited by a 'Mr Wickes', supposedly a kindly man from church, but who reveals himself to be Lord Denton. He asks that she act as an informant on her employer, Hanford. And gives her a couple of hours to decide. Seeing Denton from afar, Thomas assumes Sarah is courting the so-called 'Mr Wickes' and decides against delivering her the letter from Pepys.

Thomas returns home to Pudding Lane to find the bakery ablaze and his two daughters asleep upstairs, blissfully unaware of the fire below. Thomas scrabbles to get the girls out, only just escaping the flames by climbing across the roof, before his home is completely consumed. He sends the girls to Sarah's lodgings while he attempts to contain the fire. But upon receiving them, Sarah goes to look for Thomas. Out on the street, she is snatched by Denton's men and thrown in the back of a prison carriage...

THE GREAT FIRE

Cast Credits

Thomas Farriner	ANDREW BUCHAN
King Charles II.....	JACK HUSTON
Sarah Farriner.....	ROSE LESLIE
Samuel Pepys	DANIEL MAYS
Lord Denton	CHARLES DANCE
Richard Smith	WILLIAM BECK
Elizabeth Pepys	PERDITA WEEKS
Ruth.....	AMY MCALLISTER
James, Duke of York	OLIVER JACKSON COHEN
The Queen.....	SONYA CASSIDY
Lady Castlemain	SUSANNAH FIELDING
Frances Stewart.....	ANTONIA CLARKE
Lord Hyde	RICHARD MCCABE
Ashley Cooper	RICHARD DIXON
Hannah (aged 15).....	POLLY DARTFORD
Mary (aged 8).....	TRIXIEBELLE HARROWELL
David (aged 10)	JOEY PRICE
Vincent	ANDREW TIERNAN
Romero.....	URIEL EMIL
Hanford	DAVID SCHOFIELD
Wilson	GEOFF BELL
Mr Bagwell	BEN CROMPTON
Mrs Bagwell.....	JENNIE GRUNER
John Hobbs.....	JON FOSTER
Alfredo.....	WILL KEMP
Mayor Bludworth	NICHOLAS BLANE
Carter	JAMIE BALLARD
Servant	JOE WREDDEN

Gaoler.....	GLENN DOHERTY
Sallow-faced Woman	SARAH FINIGAN
Denton's Man.....	ANDY GATHERGOOD
Ropemaker.....	MIKE BURNSIDE
Ropemaker's Wife.....	MARY HEALEY
Ringleader	ROBERT WHITELOCK
Sheridan	TIM STEED

Production Credits

Executive Producer DOUGLAS RAE
Executive Producer LUCY BEDFORD
Producer GINA CRONK
Line Producer MICHAEL ROBINS
Director JON JONES
Writer Episodes 1, 2, 3 & 4 TOM BRADBURY
Co-writer Episode 4 CHRIS HURFORD
Co-writer Episode 4 TOM BUTTERWORTH
Director of Photography KIERAN MCGUIGAN
Production Designer DOMINIC HYMAN
Art Director WILL NEWTON
Costume Designer SHEENA NAPIER
Make-Up Designer KIRSTIN CHALMERS
Location Manager CHRIS WHITE
Sound Recordist BILLY QUINN
Stunt Co-Ordinator PAUL KENNINGTON
SFX Supervisor COLIN GORRY
Editor ALEX MACKIE
Casting Director SARAH CROWE