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ANNE





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MAXINE PEAKE LEADS ITV'S NEW DRAMA, ANNE PRODUCED BY WORLD PRODUCTIONS AND WRITTEN BY KEVIN SAMPSON

Acclaimed stage, film and television actress Maxine Peake takes the leading role in new ITV drama, *Anne*, which will air on ITV early 2022.

The award winning actress and writer plays Anne Williams, an inspirational mother who dedicated her life to campaigning for justice following her son Kevin's tragic death at Hillsborough.

Anne has been produced by award-winning programme makers, World Productions (*The Pembrokeshire Murders*, *Line of Duty*, *Vigil*) and commissioned by ITV's Head of Drama, Polly Hill. The drama was filmed on location in and around Liverpool and directed by BAFTA award winning director, Bruce Goodison (*Murdered by My Father*, *Born to Kill*, *Home Fires*).

Campaigner Anne, from Formby, near Liverpool, was devastated by the loss of 15-year-old Kevin, who died at the FA Cup semi-final between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest played at Hillsborough in April 1989.

Refusing to accept the Coroner's original verdict of accidental death, Anne was determined to unearth the truth about what happened at Hillsborough. She sought out new medical opinions, tracked down witnesses who had tried to revive Kevin on the pitch and lobbied ministers for new inquests.

At times to the cost of her own family and health, Anne stood defiant for over 20 years alongside the parents and relatives who fought to prove that their loved ones had been unlawfully killed at a football match.

Stephen Walters (*Little Boy Blue*, *Shetland*) joins Maxine Peake (*Three Girls*, *Hamlet*) to play Anne's husband, Steve Williams. Also joining the cast are Lily Shepherd (*Waterside*), Bobby Schofield (*Time*, *Anthony*) and Clare Calbraith (*Unforgotten*, *Baptiste*).

Produced by Julia Stannard (*Vanity Fair*, *War & Peace*, *Great Train Robbery*), the four-part mini-series is written by Kevin Sampson, author of *Hillsborough Voices*, which depicts the tragic events of the day, and what unfolded in the days and years after the disaster. Sampson attended the 1989 semi-final as a fan and interviewed Anne Williams on several occasions for *Hillsborough Voices*.

Commented Kevin Sampson:

“From the first time I spoke to Anne I was struck by her steely determination. Nothing and nobody were going to deter her from her ultimate aim – justice for Kevin and the 95 who died with him at Hillsborough. Anne’s is a story of a mother’s love being stronger than any opponent or obstacle. She refused to lie down, and it’s an honour that her family has entrusted us with telling her inspirational story.”

Speaking about her role as Anne Williams, Maxine said:

“Anne Williams was an extraordinary woman who spent half her life campaigning for the truth of her son’s death and the other 95 victims who were unlawfully killed at Hillsborough. Anne and her family’s story really is inspirational. She was a magnificent role model. Her fearlessness and drive to take on the British Establishment is mind blowing. I hope we can go some way to bringing the story of Anne, the families, victims and survivors of Hillsborough to an even wider audience.”

On commissioning the drama Polly Hill said:

“This drama is dedicated to Anne Williams and her diligent and tireless campaign for truth and justice. She was an inspiration and I am so proud that ITV can tell her story and tell it so powerfully thanks to World Productions and this incredible team, with a special thanks to Maxine Peake for her phenomenal performance as Anne.”

The series has been developed with the support of Anne’s daughter, Sara, who was aged 9 when her brother died. Sara has carried on her mum’s work and has assisted Kevin in the writing process.

Sara Williams said:

“I thought very carefully before deciding to go ahead with the ITV drama, *Anne*.

“Mum’s story was such a powerful and inspiring one, and we all remember how important she felt it was to get the message out there and bang the drum for justice. Over the years there has been a number of expressions of interest in dramatising her story, but the key factor for me was the involvement of people I knew personally, and who also have a deep understanding of Hillsborough, our story and all the elements around that. I am excited, as well as a little bit scared, for viewers to see my mum's story, but I just felt it was the right thing to do. Alongside some very talented people, we have given everything to ensure we produce a series that does justice to my mum, our Kev, the 97 and everyone involved with Hillsborough.”



CEO of World Productions and Creative Director Simon Heath is the drama's executive producer.

Commented Simon Heath:

"We were honoured to be given the opportunity by Sara and the Williams family to bring to the screen Anne's extraordinary and inspiring story."

ITV Studios will be responsible for the international distribution of the drama.

Note to Editors: Andrew Devine, the 97th victim of the Hillsborough disaster died on 27 July 2021, 32 years after being injured at the semi-final in 1989 that led to the 96 other deaths.

World Productions, part of ITV Studios, also produced the three part drama, *The Pembrokeshire Murders*, starring Luke Evans, Keith Allen and Alexandria Riley.

World Productions recently won the Best Drama Series BAFTA for *Save Me Too*.

INTERVIEW WITH EXECUTIVE PRODUCER SIMON HEATH

Q: How did 'Anne' come to the screen?

"I've known Kevin Sampson for nearly 20 years. Kevin is a huge Liverpool fan and former commissioner at Channel 4 who went on to become a successful novelist and screenwriter. We'd developed several projects over the years and we were in touch during the period he was writing Hillsborough Voices, a book of first person accounts of the tragedy, from the day of the match through the subsequent fight for justice.

"Kevin interviewed a huge number of people for the book, including Anne Williams. I remember Kevin getting touch with me in 2013 to say that Anne was one of the most inspiring people he had ever encountered and that there was a drama to be told based on her story. He asked me if we would be interested in producing the drama and I didn't hesitate.

"After Anne's untimely death, Kevin and I had to be sure that Anne's daughter, Sara and the rest of the Williams' family were happy for Anne's story to be dramatised. Over a period of two or three years there would be sporadic conversations with Kevin and then eventually Sara said to him, 'I'm ready for you to do this. I think mum would want this. And I trust you to do it well.'

"We then set about interviewing Sara, the Williams family and many others connected to Anne for their recollections of her and the events that defined her campaigning. We gathered a huge amount of archive material, including a lot of TV, radio and newspaper interviews that Anne had done during the course of her campaigning.

"We then needed to work out the shape of the drama. Given Anne's story plays out over nearly 25 years, Kevin and I felt we needed four episodes.

"This is Anne's unique story. But at the same time, it represents a wider whole. There were a huge number of campaigners involved in the Hillsborough story. People who did brilliant work, people who stood alongside Anne, people who were doing things in parallel with Anne.

"We've tried to reflect that in the drama with the use of archive material, to reflect the events around the campaign for justice that provided a context for Anne's personal quest. It was vital to set her story in the context of everything else that was going on.

"Sadly, the circumstances of her son Kevin's death meant there was unique evidence that allowed Anne to take his case down a very specific legal route. I think that's partly why Anne came to such real world prominence. But then what you had to add to was Anne's extraordinary personality, her refusal to give in, even when all hope looked lost. With any big political campaign there are unique figures. In terms of Hillsborough, Anne is one of them.

"We then commissioned a first script from Kevin. I sent the script to Polly Hill, Head of Drama at ITV. She read it overnight, rang me the next day and said she wanted to make it. It was a brilliant response and testimony to Anne's extraordinary story and Kevin's moving and authentic script.

"We filmed the drama towards the end of 2018 with the aim of transmitting on the 30th anniversary of the tragedy in April 2019. The court trials between January 2019 and May 2021 stopped that happening, as it did a number of documentaries and books about Hillsborough. Essentially there was a media ban."

INTERVIEW WITH SIMON HEATH CONTINUED

Q: What contact did you have with the families and groups involved with Hillsborough?

“Alongside our conversations with Sara and the Williams family, Kevin, Julia Stannard (our brilliant producer) and I all spoke to and met with a vast number of people connected to Anne and the wider Hillsborough story. These included Jenni Hicks and Margaret Aspinall from the Hillsborough Family Support Group. We wanted to reassure them that we were going to tell the story in the right way and not try to speak for them. This is not the story of the Hillsborough Family Support Group. Others may tell that story in due course. Rather it’s one mother’s journey through grief as she fights for the truth of how her son died.”

Q: How did you approach casting the role of Anne?

“Maxine Peake was the first and only thought I had when we started talking about who would play Anne. Maxine was born in Bolton rather than Liverpool, but then Anne herself was from Formby. And having worked with her before, I felt Maxine’s personal qualities would be a perfect fit for Anne. For me, spirit and character are far more important to a performance than an accent – which Maxine in any case mastered brilliantly. Maxine shares many of Anne’s characteristics – a drive, a straightforward honesty, a desire to stand up for what’s right.”

“I knew it was going to be an incredibly demanding, emotional shoot, and that Maxine would be in virtually every scene, ageing nearly 25 years across the shoot. That’s tough for any actor. But I knew Maxine could handle that and then some.”

“When we offered the part to Maxine, she asked all the right questions. She wanted to know who was supporting the project, who we had spoken to, the research and so on. Once she had read the scripts, met with us and spoken to Kevin she really wanted to take the part.”

Q: This is also the story of Kevin Williams’ stepdad Steve, played by Stephen Walters?

“Steve is a very private man. His grief was very private and there probably came a point where he wanted to try, as far as one can, to move forward from Kevin’s death. But that wasn’t what Anne wanted to do. Ultimately Hillsborough split Steve and Anne up. I think Kevin Sampson’s script captures that. The awful side of grief is it doesn’t unite people – it tears them apart.”

“Steve gave us his blessing for the drama and that was crucial. Stephen Walters’ performance really captures Steve. You mourn for the break-up of the marriage but you don’t feel either party has done anything wrong. It’s Hillsborough that split them up.”

Q: Nothing, of course, can compare to the real events. But this must have been an emotional and difficult job for the cast and crew?

“It was very emotional. Take the long sequence at the beginning of episode 1 where Anne and Steve travel to Sheffield for news of what has happened to Kevin. Looking at that through 2021 eyes, the process they went through to have it confirmed that their son had died is tortuous and diabolical. It was very upsetting for everyone filming those scenes.”

“We filmed the whole drama on location in Liverpool and Sheffield, so there were lots of people in our cast and crew who had links to the Hillsborough tragedy. So it was very challenging, but everyone was incredibly professional.”

“Some of the real people involved in the story visited the set at different times. It was wonderful – and very emotional - when Sara met Maxine. It really felt like we had the support of the city in making the drama happen. We were able to use St George’s Hall in Liverpool. We came down to London to film at the Royal Courts of Justice. We relied on a lot of goodwill from people and we were really grateful for that.”

INTERVIEW WITH SIMON HEATH CONTINUED

“It required very careful negotiation, but we were able to film inside Anfield and Hillsborough. Certainly, with Hillsborough we weren’t certain for a long time whether the club would allow us to go back. But it was really important to us across the shoot that we were filming in the real locations.”

Q: Were there any issues about using archive TV footage?

“The BBC quite rightly are very protective of the Grandstand footage from the day of the tragedy. We were granted permission to play the footage on the TV screens in the Williams’ living room and then in the social club where Anne goes for further news. Then once we had a finished cut we further conferred with the BBC, and made additional changes where we felt it was possible to identify the victims in the footage. You have to accept you have a huge responsibility in the way you use that footage.

“But we did need the audience to understand what happened and why it was such a seismic event on the day, playing out on live television. So we absolutely needed that Grandstand footage. Our way into the story is to see how the events unfold from Anne’s perspective. How she learns of the terrible tragedy unfolding that her son is caught up in. These days there would be mobile phones, texts, social media and so on. Anne was seeing these scenes at a football match on television and she was unable to get information from anywhere else. They were ringing hotlines, nobody was answering them. And then they finally got a call late that night suggesting they drive to Sheffield.”

Q: Have the Hillsborough victims, families, friends and survivors had any justice?

“Professor Phil Scraton, who has been at the forefront of the campaign for justice from the very beginning, said something very important in the aftermath of the remaining criminal trials being discontinued in May 2021.

“He said that the failed prosecutions shouldn’t take away from the massive victory the families won in having the original inquests overturned and a verdict of unlawful killing put in their place. Perhaps it’s not the justice the families sought through the prosecutions. But the truth did come out. The 96 were unlawfully killed. So the families did have a victory.

“Our drama ends with Anne’s death in 2013 and her belief that justice was coming. And perhaps she wasn’t wrong. There was an unlawful killing verdict at the inquests that concluded in April 2016. It’s just that no-one has ever been convicted of manslaughter or perverting the course of justice in relation to the Hillsborough deaths. That’s the reason I would still say the families haven’t had justice in its purest or true sense. But they have had a victory. And I think that victory should not be underestimated. To get any kind of victory in this country against an establishment prepared to cover up a tragedy in the way they did with Hillsborough is quite an achievement.

“There is a wider story that includes Hillsborough. It’s still playing out with Grenfell. While we have yet to have public inquiries into the handling of Covid, people may be less accepting of what we’ve all had dealt to us. I think that’s what happened with Hillsborough.”

Q: Do you have a personal memory of that day in April 1989?

“I was a student visiting my girlfriend in Northampton on the day and like a lot of people, we put Grandstand on the TV and the pictures started coming in and it was just awful. I can’t remember anything about that weekend apart from the television in the corner of the room and those pictures.

“It still upsets me now thinking about it. I was a huge fan of the BBC radio DJ John Peel, who was a lifelong Liverpool supporter. I tuned into his programme on the Monday evening after the disaster on the Saturday. He started to speak and he couldn’t...and he just started crying. This incredibly stoic, often dour man was just broken with grief. I’ll never forget it. I was sat on my own listening in my girlfriend’s room and I choked up. And then he played You’ll Never Walk Alone.”

INTERVIEW WITH SIMON HEATH CONTINUED

Q: What are your overriding emotions when it comes to Hillsborough?

“Anger and upset. I didn’t have any links to Liverpool or to the disaster itself. But I was a Birmingham City fan in that era, when a Leeds United supporter was killed at Birmingham’s ground, crushed by a falling wall, in 1985, four years before Hillsborough. You recognised how dangerous football grounds had become. And the authorities did nothing, happy to demonise football supporters and the game itself as the problem.

“There is also the fundamental injustice of Hillsborough. That however bad things had been, maybe they could have been better if justice had been brought to the families in the early years after the disaster. All of the stuff that has cascaded on after that, how much of it might have been stopped by just going down to the basic level of the police putting their hands up afterwards and saying, ‘We made major mistakes here. We will take what’s coming to us.’”

Q: Can you tell us about the new documentary which has also been made?

“The new documentary is a companion piece to the drama. The aim was to bring the Hillsborough story up to date, from Anne’s death at the end of our drama to the court cases being discontinued in May. There are some fantastic interviews with lots of people who helped with our drama or were connected to the wider story, many of which were conducted by Maxine herself.

“In terms of ‘Anne’, those who have already seen the drama, those connected to it, the family, have been incredibly positive. It’s their story. It’s their mum’s story. You want them to feel as positively about the drama as we do. And they do.”



INTERVIEW WITH WRITER KEVIN SAMPSON

Q: As a Liverpool fan, what was your own experience of Hillsborough on April 15 1989?

“My brother Neil and I along with a good friend of ours whose nickname was Hobo had a long-standing friendship with a Juventus fan called Mauro Garino. He was obsessed with British football and loved coming to Liverpool. He used to come every Christmas and always took in a game or two, home and away. Loved the whole culture and vibrant atmosphere in the city. Our friendship had sustained, and survived the Heysel Stadium disaster in 1985.

“Mauro’s birthday is on the 7th of April. We managed to get a ticket for him for the FA Cup semi-final at Hillsborough and surprised him with it when he came over. It was really moving, giving him his birthday card, him opening it and finding the ticket inside. So, we all went across the Pennines by car to the game in Sheffield.

“On the day everything was upbeat up until the moment we walked through the park that led to the bottleneck outside the Leppings Lane end. That was the first we knew anything was markedly different. Just how far backed up the crowd was. This was about 2:30pm before the 3pm kick off. At that point the sun was shining, it was FA Cup semi final day and everyone was in good spirits. But when that crowd wasn’t particularly moving and it was starting to look as though we might miss the kick off, people were becoming agitated. There was a lot of discomfort as well. A lot of kids being pulled out of the crowd. People shouting to the police. There were a couple of police on horseback and quite a few on foot. They were all as disturbed and as anxious as we were about the mounting congestion and were doing what they could to tell everybody to just carry on queueing and waiting. For the main part I felt everybody behaved impeccably.

“When they opened the first of the concertina gates at the ground people actually just stood back. It didn’t enter our heads they were being opened to let us in. Then when it became apparent, people started to file inside. There was no sudden stampede, there was no in-rush. People were thinking it was a bit too good to be true. But we were actually walking in.

“I had been to Hillsborough before and I’m also relatively diminutive. So, wherever there are crowds I veer away. Everybody was going down the entrance to the central pens but I pulled the others to the left and said, ‘Let’s go round. There’s another entrance at the side.’ At that point we were still thinking we had an incredible stroke of luck because a steward and a uniformed police officer told us we could sit on the side of the pitch. I couldn’t believe it. At an FA Cup semi final. Sitting on the touchline. Literally the best position you could possibly have.

“The game had already started by then - it had kicked off a minute or so before - and when we sat down and looked to our right we could see how close people’s heads were together. It was so tightly packed. Then people were being lain out behind the goal and on the pitch and eventually the game is stopped. We saw somebody being helped past with their arm looking like a letter ‘Z’ - clearly it had been severely broken. And then the enormity of what was happening dawned on us. It was fairly easy to surmise there had been severe crushing in the Leppings Lane end. My brother Neil was one of the first people to join in with that effort to pull the advertising hoardings off and use those as makeshift stretchers. We all did what we could to help.

“Later, when the game was completely called off and Kenny Dalglish came out and the announcement was made that everybody was to leave the stadium immediately, as slowly and calmly as possible, you were starting to hear news from people who had transistor radios that there had been deaths. We had wondered - having seen one or two people - if there had been fatalities. When we got back to the car and put the radio on, the first figures started coming through. It was devastating. We all immediately burst into tears. Mauro passionately so. He was crying his eyes out. As you can imagine, it was a very sombre journey back over the Pennines.”

INTERVIEW WITH KEVIN SAMPSON CONTINUED

Q: You compiled Hillsborough Voices, first published in 2016, in association with the Hillsborough Justice Campaign. Why did you want to write that book?

“I had become very interested in the way history is passed down and the way history is recorded. In particular I became more and more interested in the notion of first hand accounts. That coincided with the explosion of social media, around 2009, 2010, when Twitter really took off. It’s a very supportive community in Merseyside. Those who were at the game and the wider Liverpool and football community, everybody knows what went on. So, it was a shock when you started to be exposed to these conflicting points of view. Sometimes in all innocence and sometimes in ignorance, people were adopting the ‘no smoke without fire’ line. But a lot, it has to be said, from a purely antagonistic point of view. Just seemingly wanting to believe the worst.

“And then there was the whole momentum that started with the 20 year anniversary that led to the publication of the Hillsborough Independent Panel report, which told the world what we knew. So as a writer and somebody who had a really close connection with Hillsborough, I wanted to reach out first of all to the people I knew who had been involved since the start in campaigning. But also, to get the perspectives of a whole range of people who were actually there on the day or had subsequently had a role. And really let them do the talking. So, I was purely the tape recorder, the conduit, a filter. It was their first hand accounts that I wanted to build up into a reliable document of the day itself, the aftermath and the subsequent campaigning efforts.”

Q: Anne Williams was one of the first to encourage you to work on the book. Her voice is included but she died before you could conclude your interviews with her?

“Tragically, the whole coming together of the book project coincided with her diagnosis and the very rapid decline through her cancer. Right to the end she would have days when she could take on the world. Really energetic good days. And she had more and more bad days.

“I wasn’t able to conclude the interviews but her spirit was very much an inspiration and an energising force behind the project.”

Q: How was the TV drama developed?

“I look at ‘Anne’ as a companion piece to Jimmy McGovern’s Hillsborough drama in 1996, which was incredibly strong and moving. The timing of that film was so important. It gave a massive shot in the arm to the campaign when it really needed it.

“I had already worked with Simon Heath of World Productions on quite a few projects and bumped into him in London one day. Simon asked what I was working on and I told him about Hillsborough Voices. We had a launch for the book in London and Simon came along to that. That really was where the idea came from. Simon was also interested in the idea of a companion piece to the Jimmy McGovern drama which would bring the Hillsborough campaign story up to date.

“After Anne passed away in 2013, the Warrington inquests took place. They went on to become the longest jury based judicial process in UK legal history - two and a half years. Quite appropriately, everything was embargoed. So, Hillsborough Voices was finished but couldn’t be published. And we couldn’t even discuss the idea of a drama while the inquests were still going on. Everything really precipitated from when the inquest jury returned the verdict in April 2016 that the 96 people who lost their lives at Hillsborough were unlawfully killed.

“From that point I was speaking with Anne’s daughter Sara and also with Anne’s brother Danny, along with a journalist called Dan Kay, who in those days was working on the Liverpool Echo and co-wrote the second volume of Anne’s book - ‘With Hope In Her Heart’. Sara’s promise to her mum when she was dying was that she would complete that book.

INTERVIEW WITH KEVIN SAMPSON CONTINUED

” So, from the end of 2016 we started talking about the idea of a TV drama in a really focused way and Sara gave her blessing to the project. Simon always had Maxine Peake in his mind as playing Anne. She was attached from quite an early stage and momentum really gathered from that point.”

Q: Why tell Anne’s story?

“The Hillsborough story is so huge and there are so many admirable and inspirational characters and so many facets to it. But if we wanted to look to one person who embodied all of that communal effort, it’s Anne. I spoke to Anne about this and she was laughing, saying, ‘Who’s going to play me?’ That was where the whole thing started.

“By choosing to write a drama about Anne, that is not to say she did any of this on her own. All of the campaigners are heroic. Especially the women and especially the mums. My original working title for the drama was ‘Mum’. If there is one enduring message about this drama it is about that universal power of mothers who do whatever is necessary to do right by their children. In this case it was a mother’s love. In the best possible sense, an ordinary mum compelled to go to extraordinary lengths to simply get the truth about what happened to her son. Because she was told so many different accounts. So, to get the truth and to get justice for Kevin and for everybody who died at Hillsborough.

“In the somewhat misleadingly frail demeanour of Anne Williams, she actually embodies that fighting spirit that all of the Hillsborough mums shared. There are so many inspirational Hillsborough women and campaigners. Anne embodies the best of them. She embodies so many of those qualities. Essentially, she was an ordinary mum when she woke up on the morning of the game on the 15th of April 1989, going off to do a weekend job. One of her many jobs to bring money into the family. And by the time she went to bed her entire life had changed. You can absolutely say that Hillsborough killed Anne Williams as well as Kevin.

“The skills that she took on. She became expert in the law. She read voraciously. She read up on the minutiae of crush asphyxia as distinct from traumatic asphyxia. She spent time with specialists, surgeons and medical experts and became expert herself. She was relentless. It’s these qualities, and relating them back to that very human, that essential spirit of wanting to protect your child, those are the things that I felt were so important to portray.

“We tell the story through Anne but others are involved. Sheila Coleman, for example, is integral to Anne’s story. Anne’s daughter Sara has said on a number of occasions, ‘Sheila gave my mum her voice.’ Anne found it very difficult to make eye contact. She was a shy woman. And if you look at the Anne Williams on ‘Truth Day’ in 2012, standing on the St George’s Hall Plateau addressing a crowd of thousands, you would not think this was somebody who had had low self-esteem and had wanted to stay in the background for most of her life.

“Sheila was somebody who channelled that inner strength, that indomitable character that Anne had and helped to focus it on those areas that she could go ahead with. For example, the tracking down of individuals. She found this photograph of the people who had carried Kevin and went to such lengths to track down all of those individuals and found out that one of them was actually an off-duty policeman. She was relentless in her attempts to identify that policeman. She kept going and kept going. I think Sheila is very important in that stage of Anne’s genesis as a campaigner and as an investigator.

“She described them as being like Cagney and Lacey at times when they were trying to track down missing files and photographs and, crucially, the video tapes from the BBC they found. Notoriously, Anne used to carry these discoveries and files she accumulated round in a Kwik Save bag. It was quite a familiar sight, seeing her come into this pub, The Vernon Arms in Dale Street, Liverpool, with her Kwik Save bags.

INTERVIEW WITH KEVIN SAMPSON CONTINUED

“And then there are people like the Glovers...John Glover was the original chair of the Family Support Group. In the year immediately after the disaster Anne was bewildered and simply unable to process what had happened. Partly because of the misinformation she had been fed. But I think the pivot for her, where she steps out from being passive to being incredibly active, was the verdicts of the original inquests. The sight of those families outside the High Court in Sheffield. Broken, devastated and unable to understand how a verdict of accidental death could have been reached. When she thinks, ‘OK, this is the moment where I have to do something. I have to know what happened to my boy.’ And John Glover is instrumental in introducing her to Sheila and from there her life as a dedicated campaigner, investigator, legal and medical expert, all of these things, begins to coalesce.”

Q: What was it like to watch Maxine Peake’s performance as Anne?

“I can’t begin to express my admiration for Maxine. People are going to be unbelievably moved by her performance. She absolutely inhabits Anne’s soul. The likeness is incredible. But she also inhabits her persona, spirit and soul. It’s very moving. But away from the performance, the way Maxine has been with the Williams family and the wider community, the way she interacts with the crew, I was just knocked out by her. In the sense of her humility and her kindness as an individual. That makes it all the more appropriate. It’s an honour to play Anne but it’s also an incredible challenge to portray her. One thing I am so much looking forward to is for a wide audience to share in that performance. It is magnificent. She is magnificent.”

Q: The role Stephen Walters plays as Anne’s husband Steve is also crucial to this story?

“Quite rightly we talk about the 97 with reverence and sadness. But the collateral damage reaches so much further. In terms of the Williams, the disaster broke their marriage. And that would be true of so many other families, including families of people who survived the day.

“Steve, like so many people, had chosen not to become involved in the Hillsborough campaign and not to speak. He was very much a solitary, silent sufferer and eventually went to live on his own. So, it was an important moment when Steve agreed for me to come round to his flat to speak to him. He was so encouraging. Again, it’s a tragedy because he is such an incredibly intelligent, articulate, insightful and graceful man. As he said himself, him and Anne had it good. They had a happy family life. When Sara came along the family unit was complete. And they enjoyed life. There was music and a lot of laughter in the house. They were living a full and fruitful life. And their relationship was cut short.

“Steve gave us his absolute blessing. He trusted me to handle the story with sensitivity. Stephen Walters also intuitively understood the sensitivities of that situation and got into the skin of Steve’s gentle and tragic persona. It’s moving, powerful stuff.”

Q: The first episode is a harrowing, emotional watch. But that is as it should be?

“I think the important thing to emphasise is this is a story about ordinary people. It’s a human story and it is a tragedy. It’s emotional. Because what it brings home is this is something that should not have happened. It was avoidable. It could happen to anybody who has an interest in spectator sport, whether you go to football, rugby or whatever. Music festivals. Anywhere where there is a crowd. It brings it home that these were people who had set off in the morning with absolute excitement and hope in their hearts. And they didn’t come home. Anne’s 15-year-old son Kevin was one of them. Anne wanted to know what happened to him. She couldn’t allow herself any peace until she had found out that truth and done what she could to address that truth. Her abiding mission was that she wanted the correct cause of death on his death certificate. She didn’t live to see that. But Sara did. Sara picked up the death certificate and that’s something that gives her great solace.”

INTERVIEW WITH KEVIN SAMPSON CONTINUED

Q: Did you visit the filming?

“As a policy I tend to stay away from filming of anything I’ve written. It’s a collaborative process. You trust your creatives and your collaborators. I don’t think they want the writer looking over their shoulder. There is separation anxiety, of course. But you hand over your work and you trust others. You’ve got Maxine Peake and Stephen Walters plus the director Bruce Goodison, who brought an incredible sensitivity and sensibility to the work. I went along on the day they were filming in the Justice Campaign shop because that’s somewhere that has real resonance for me. And then on the last day I went to give everybody a round of applause. Other than that I was watching rushes.”

Q: Have the Hillsborough victims, families and survivors had any justice?

“I think everybody who was closely connected with the campaign thought our day came in Warrington in 2016. There were 14 separate points and each of those came out in favour of the families, the survivors, the campaigners and the Liverpool supporters. The legal teams at the time took the families to one side and they indicated this might be as good as it gets. So, I would say there was a weary inevitability about the fact that no-one has ever been convicted of manslaughter or perverting the course of justice in relation to the Hillsborough deaths. That doesn’t make it right but I don’t think anybody was surprised.

“Returning to how the collateral damage of Hillsborough reaches, sadly, beyond the 97 who died, I think it’s important that we recognise the many, many others who have suffered as a result of the disaster. There are dozens that we know of who have just not been able to carry on; who have died at their own hand. That is the definition of a tragedy, and these are the hidden histories that don’t get told. Those are the things that, for all of the moments when you think, ‘Should we be telling this story?’ - the answer is an emphatic yes. This is why dramas like ANNE have to be seen. People have to know how deeply this avoidable tragedy has affected so many ordinary people.

“The politicians who were closest to the campaign, the legacy they would like to see emerge from Hillsborough and from other miscarriages of justice is something they call Hillsborough Law. Which is that funding should never be an impediment to justice. The reason the families were able to prevail at Warrington was that, for the first time, they had access to the best legal representation in the country. That had been denied to them in the past, partly due to the brutal reality of funding. If you want the best you have to be able to pay for it. And that’s what Hillsborough Law is all about. It’s to ensure that anybody, God forbid, who is in a similar situation where they are coming up against a richer or more powerful adversary in the law court, that funding should not be an impediment to justice. That is something I know that Andy Burnham and a number of the current and former MPs are passionate about and are fighting for.”

Q: Had he lived, Kevin Williams would have been 49 in 2022. What might have been?

“So much to live for. We use Kevin’s original sketch in the drama. He drew this picture of the Liverpool captain lifting the European Cup. Kevin was a gifted artist. He was interested in writing. He might have become a journalist. Kevin and so many others like him, he was a kid with his entire life ahead of him. And when those anniversaries and birthdays come around, it brings it home to you, the enormity of the situation.”



INTERVIEW WITH KEVIN SAMPSON CONTINUED

Q: Anne Williams was a woman of steely determination?

“Anne never gave up. There is a scene in the drama where Steve says to Anne, ‘Most people are good.’ I think that’s as important a message as anything. Steve and Anne adhered to that basic view and she would always give people a chance. Each time a door closed and she got knocked back, for a few days she’d be thinking, ‘That’s it. I can’t face doing this again.’ But there would be another chance, another glimmer of hope and she would go for it. With an optimism and an expectation that this time it would work out. She was an incredible woman.”

INTERVIEW WITH PRODUCER JULIA STANNARD

Q: When did you begin work on the drama?

“I’ve worked with Simon Heath of World Productions over the years on United and then The Great Train Robbery. He had mentioned to me that they had a project about Hillsborough and when the time was right could he talk to me about it. When I was filming Vanity Fair in 2016 Simon messaged me and said would I read Kevin’s script. I read episode one on the set of Vanity Fair and suddenly realised I was sitting in the middle of a room full of people, crying. I messaged Simon and said, ‘Yes, of course, I will do it.’ I went straight on to Anne from Vanity Fair and we shot the drama in 2018.

“We decided to contact the families to let them know we were making this drama before it was announced. I was determined we must do that and that they wouldn’t read about it first in the press. They would hear about it from us, with the opportunity to let us know about any concerns they might have.”

Q: What happened after you had finished filming?

“Various court proceedings meant we had to delay the screening. One of the things that came back from our personal contact with the families was that we must not in any way jeopardise the embargo related to the court cases.

“So we had to make the drama as secretly as we could. We would normally have put out appeals to fill Anfield with fans for scenes recreating a Hillsborough memorial service. But, of course, we couldn’t. That was a small price to pay. All we cared about was respecting the legal and judicial process. We would never have done anything to jeopardise it. We had to be incredibly careful.

“But it was very sad to feel the families were forbidden from speaking about Hillsborough for a two year period. The world was forbidden from speaking about it. Now we want as many people as possible to see this drama.”

Q: Do you have a personal memory of that day?

“My father was an absolute obsessive Liverpool supporter and I was a Liverpool fan before I could speak. In April 1989 I was just out of Uni, living in London in my first job in the industry. There were no mobile phones back then. I was filming all day and I came home to my partner at the time. He had to tell me what had happened. I actually couldn’t believe it. I had to put the TV news on to see it for myself. It was so shocking, all those terrible scenes of what had happened.

“I was calling people and checking that everybody was safe. Checking that my father and friends hadn’t been there. I just felt terrible sadness and shock, the same as everybody. But I didn’t have any personal losses attached to the story. Just the sadness as a human being and a Liverpool supporter.”

Q: Why is it important to remind people about the truth of what happened at Hillsborough?

“Jimmy McGovern’s 1996 Hillsborough is one of the most important pieces of drama ever made in terms of how it changed the public perception of that event. He is one of the greatest writers in the industry. Phenomenal. His bravery in taking on that drama is immense. At the time so many people believed the terrible, false media version of what Hillsborough was about. That was the first time it was really challenged in a drama. And so brilliantly done.

INTERVIEW WITH JULIA STANNARD CONTINUED

“Some people still believe that false media nonsense. I was so shocked when I started working on this. The amount of people who I would say are reasonably well informed who still believe there was some element of blame attached to the fans and that there had been rioting. That this was just another occurrence of the way fans behaved back in the late 80s. All of which is totally untrue and has been proven to be false. I found myself lecturing them about what had actually happened.

“There is also a whole generation of young people who don’t even know what Hillsborough was. Particularly because of the gagging order that existed around the 30th anniversary in relation to court proceedings which has silenced voices for a number of years. This new drama tells Anne Williams’ story. A story about the truth.”

Q: Did you meet Anne’s daughter, Sara Williams?

“My producing the project was always contingent on Anne Williams’ daughter Sara Williams being happy with it. Simon Heath, Kevin Sampson and I had lunch with Sara in Liverpool. I think Sara was happy I was somebody from Liverpool who had a personal connection to Liverpool and was a Liverpool fan.

“My father was very ill at the time of Hillsborough. He had cancer over a horrible five year protracted period and died in 1992. Obviously that’s not directly connected to Hillsborough but I have a story of loss that spans that period and we talked a little bit about that. I think Sara felt I was somebody who understood that side of life as well.

“We got on very well and I was in touch with Sara all of the way through. She came on to set on many occasions and we would also talk on the phone. I wanted her to always feel she could talk to me about anything. She is so brave to have agreed to let us tell her mother’s story. And just reliving those terrible, traumatic events. And not just Sara. Michael, Kevin’s elder brother, as well and Danny, Anne’s brother. They were also on set quite a lot. Again, we went to Danny and Michael’s homes before filming and met their families.

“As soon as we were in production with a director on board we went to visit Sara in the family home that was Anne’s home and then became Sara’s home. She was so generous in just letting us wander around and it was so helpful. For example, the Pietà in episode four which the, then, Bishop of Liverpool James Jones gave to Anne in the final days of her life - we saw that on a shelf. Just seeing that and hearing Bishop James tell that story, that became embodied in the drama. There were quite a few things like that. The drawing of the European Cup that Kevin made, which is still in their hall. He was working on that at the time of his death and it features in episode one. They are the human details that flesh out a story and make it feel real to the audience.”

Q: You also spoke to Anne’s former husband Steve?

“Steve agreed to talk to us and welcomed us into his home. He let us go through a big carrier bag of photos and that’s where we found some beautiful family photos of him and Anne on their wedding day. And Anne with young Sara and Kevin and them on their family holiday. Steve was so helpful to us throughout.

“It was really important for us to show the personal tragedy as well with the end of Anne and Steve’s marriage. They were such a loving couple you felt that they would have stayed together. Hillsborough destroyed them. I’m sure that was true of many families. How do you function when your lives are completely railroaded by an event like that? I’m sure many relationships broke down. Neither one of them was to blame. They dealt with their grief in different ways which just prevented them continuing their marriage.

“Stephen Walters, who plays Steve, played Ian Glover in Jimmy McGovern’s Hillsborough film and had met the Glovers. So he was already very close to the project.”

INTERVIEW WITH JULIA STANNARD CONTINUED

Q: Who else did you consult?

“Just before we went into pre-production I felt it was important that we spoke to some of the key people and checked how they felt about us telling this story. So I spoke to Colin McKeown, who is a good friend and Jimmy McGovern’s producer. I knew he had a very good connection to Jenni Hicks and Margaret Aspinall of the Hillsborough Family Support Group. He said, ‘There are a lot of different voices in the Hillsborough family. You should talk to them and hear their thoughts on your drama and what you are doing.’

“I was really keen to do that. So we set up a meeting at Colin’s production base in Liverpool. Margaret and Jenni came along and Simon, Kevin and I met them. They had a great deal of respect for Anne and the work she had done. But they said we should be clear that what we were telling was Anne’s story. Not their story. And there may come a time when they would want to tell their story.

“It’s why we titled the programme: ‘Anne: One Mother’s Story.’ Because there are so many stories to tell about Hillsborough, so many families. We can only tell Anne’s story and Anne’s perspective. We decided on that approach from the beginning. And it’s why we end the story at the final Anfield memorial Anne attended. It’s not the end of the Hillsborough story. But Anne’s story ends with her death.

“The former Bishop of Liverpool James Jones was so helpful. Kevin and I met him before we started filming. His affection for Anne was huge. He had been a great support to her while she was very ill and dying of cancer. I think her faith became increasingly important to her at the end of her life. He, again, said, ‘You have to be very clear this is not all of the Hillsborough families’ experience and that you can only tell Anne’s story.’ So we did discuss various ideas for titles with Bishop James and we decided on that one in the end.

“Bishop James introduced Kevin and me to Ann Ridley and Ken Sutton, who were the Home Office team who created the Hillsborough Independent Panel. They introduced us to Bill Kirkup who was the medical officer on the Panel. Just having these inside contacts was so important in terms of telling this story as accurately as we could.

“Prof Phil Scraton’s book ‘Hillsborough: The Truth’ was tremendously helpful as well. He was such a key person in finding the files, finding the police statements that had been changed. He was a member of the Hillsborough Independent Panel and primary author of its report.”

Q: What wider story did you want to tell through telling Anne’s own story?

“The story of probably the greatest injustice of recent years. The fact this terrible event happened. It was preventable. So that’s the first tragedy. And then the fact it was covered up so determinedly by the establishment causing so much more grief and pain to people whose lives were already so broken. People need to know that. We can’t give the families justice. But we can give them a platform from which, again, the truth can be told.”

Q: Were you involved in securing the BBC Grandstand ‘live’ footage from that afternoon for use in the drama?

“The BBC were really helpful and agreed we could use some of the footage. When you’ve still got people querying what happened, the best way to educate them is to show them. So that’s why having the footage of what really happened on that day is so important. Although, of course, we had to be incredibly sensitive that we didn’t show anything that could cause distress to a particular family, it was absolutely essential that we showed the truth of what happened.

INTERVIEW WITH JULIA STANNARD CONTINUED

“The Liverpool fans did what they could on the pitch that day to try and save lives. And those people were vilified for their actions. Trying to save lives. When there were 42 ambulances outside and the police would not allow them on to the pitch because they said the Liverpool fans were rioting. Which was never the case. It’s astonishing. The fans were tirelessly doing their best. But they didn’t have the basic medical skills to save those people.

“Almost half of the Hillsborough victims could have been saved with just the most basic triage. And then to be vilified for those efforts. It is just staggering. The extent of the injustice is so appalling.

“It was important that we heard from some of the key people who Anne confronted during her campaign in their own words, either through documentary footage or transcripts from court proceedings and witness statements.”

Q: Can you tell us about the casting of Maxine Peake, who plays Anne Williams?

“Maxine’s name was in the frame right from the start. I knew, in the same way that Simon did, that she was the perfect person for the role. It was important that she was from the North West and somebody who is so passionate about social and political issues. Somebody people feel they can trust. That she has a powerful voice in her own right as a woman as well as being one of the best actresses of her generation. We honestly never talked about anybody else. We were all committed to making it work with Maxine.

“Maxine was amazing. Some days when we were filming I felt so sorry for her because there are very few light moments. Every day was tough. With so many traumatic scenes to film. Several on the same day sometimes. And yet she was able to pull it off and remain cheerful and functional throughout.

“Of course, nothing can ever compare to the real life experience. But it was a very emotional experience for the cast and crew. I remember going to Hillsborough for the first time. I had never been before. I was glad I had a couple of visits before filming and I was aware on the filming day how upsetting it was for people. Walking into the tunnel, knowing that was where so many people had died, standing on the terrace where people had been crushed to death.

“I emailed the current owners of Sheffield Wednesday about filming the drama at Hillsborough and they agreed straight away. They were keen to support the drama and enable it. As were Liverpool FC, Liverpool Cathedral and St George’s Hall in Liverpool. All of the real places where we wanted to film were helpful. And the whole city of Liverpool embraced the project. People couldn’t do enough for us. We had so much support.

“Filming ‘Truth Day’ was emotional for everybody. Just imagining how it must have felt for those families in September 2012 after 23 years of campaigning, to finally hear the truth come out in the report by the Hillsborough Independent Panel. It must have been incredible. When you reconstruct that - and, again, nothing can compare to the reality - you get a small insight into how it must have felt.

“Also filming at Anfield. Filming the final memorial that Anne attended just before she died. Sara came that day with her daughter. Seeing Maxine dressed and made up to look like her mother when she was close to her death, that was so emotional for Sara and for all of us. You can’t make a drama like this without connecting in some way with the emotion of the story. There were many days like that.”

INTERVIEW WITH JULIA STANNARD CONTINUED

Q: What drove Anne Williams in her campaign for justice after the death of her son Kevin?

“Before she started her campaigning Anne was very shy and not somebody who was used to speaking in public at all. Anne was just so enraged by the injustice of it that she found her voice. I think she had no choice. She couldn’t live with the anger and frustration of it. I think she was forced to speak, forced to find her political voice because she couldn’t live with the dishonesty and the injustice of it. That is what drove her, constantly.

“Anne educated herself about legal matters. Hillsborough Justice Campaign lawyer Elkan Abrahamson, who knew Anne well, said she would have made a very good solicitor by the end of it. She knew all of the nuances of the case. She had a great brain and really understood the complexities. That was all completely unknown to her beforehand.”

Q: Hillsborough is now seen as part of a much wider number of injustices which still continue today?

“What we can do as human beings and as film makers is to tackle those issues. That’s why I do what I do. I always try to work on projects that in some way make some kind of difference to the way we feel and think about our lives. Speaking out about injustice is one of the most important things we can do.

“Have the families got justice? They’ve got the truth. They have unearthed the truth. But, for me, I don’t think they have got justice. Anne did all that she could to achieve justice in that process. Many of the families are very angry. Of course they are.”

Q: How do you reflect back on making this drama?

“Bishop James said to me, ‘It’s the most important thing you’ll ever do in your career.’ Which was very kind. I feel privileged to have been able to help tell this story. I hope it does something to eradicate the great harm that was done by certain tabloid press in the aftermath of the event. I’m happy to have been a part of supporting the truth, getting the truth out there and helping correctly represent one of the greatest miscarriages of justice of our time.”



INTERVIEW WITH SARA WILLIAMS - DAUGHTER OF ANNE WILLIAMS

Q: How old were you when your brother Kevin died?

"I was six years younger than Kevin, who was 15. So I was nine, nearly 10, when he died. Before Hillsborough we were just a happy-go-lucky family. The house was full of laughter. We had a really good childhood and then Hillsborough happened.

"Kevin got a ticket for the FA Cup semi final at Hillsborough without my parents knowing about it. I remember him telling them about it the night before the match. My dad wasn't very happy and told him he couldn't go. Because it would have been his first away match. But Kevin had been studying so hard for his exams that my dad then backed down and said he could go.

"Kevin's drawing of the European Cup appears in the drama. He was doing that for an exam and I sat with him while he did it most nights at the kitchen table just before he went to Hillsborough."

Q: Did you understand what was happening as reports came in from Hillsborough?

"It was on the news and I remember saying to my mum and dad, 'Is that where our Kev is?' It was a shock. My mum and dad went to Sheffield on the Sunday morning in the hope of trying to find him. It was later that day that my grandma told me he was dead."

Q: At the end of your book - 'With Hope In Her Heart' - you pay tribute to your mother by writing, "Not bad for a mum from Formby." Like so many others, hers was a very long journey?

"Before Hillsborough she was just an 'ordinary' hard working mum. She had a part-time job in the newsagent. You would never have thought she would have gone on to do what she did with all of the campaigning. She was so timid. Unless you knew her. I remember on the day she died they showed some of her old interviews. I thought, 'How shy is my mum on those interviews?'

"My mother's campaigning began when she learned Kevin had still been alive in the gym and had opened his eyes and said the word 'mum' before he died at 4pm. That's what started my mum's campaign."

Q: Did her campaigning impact on the family home life?

"It was frustrating. Taking up more and more of her time. We were all grieving for Kevin and I really didn't understand it as a kid. I remember thinking, 'Why can't she leave it and stop going on about Kevin?' Being 10, 11, 12, you don't realise. It's only when you become an older teenager you begin to realise what has happened. At the time I wanted an end to it. We just missed our Kev. Most nights I could hear my mum crying. And she was also angry about the things she was finding out.

"It took its toll in the end on my mum and dad's marriage. My mum was still my mum but she had changed into a campaigner. My dad always supported her and told her she had to carry on. But it just got too much for them and their marriage.

"It was only when I had a child of my own that I really understood why she did what she did. I had always supported her. But when you have your own kids it makes you realise more. There is nothing stronger than a mother's love."

Q: Why did your mother keep campaigning for justice despite countless setbacks?

"My mother kept going because she knew she was right. There was more to be uncovered. She tracked down so many witnesses who told her what had really happened. Also talking to other families who had found out the truth. There was no way she was going to give up."

INTERVIEW WITH SARA WILLIAMS CONTINUED

Q: What are your memories of seeing your mum speaking to the crowds on 'Truth Day' - the day in September 2012 when the Hillsborough Independent Panel released their report?

"I was at home watching it on TV and speaking to my mum on the phone. I remember her saying, 'All these years I feel like I've been banging my head against a brick wall.' It was the relief she felt. To finally have the truth revealed.

"I was so proud and emotional when I saw my mum speaking out at St George's Tableau. There was also that relief. We were all relieved. All of the families. And we were in a bit of shock as well. After all of those years and never really thinking that you would ever get the truth in the end.

"Then towards the end of October my mum was given the diagnosis and told she was dying. She went to the 24th Anfield Memorial on Monday April 15th 2013, just three days before she died. My mum was adamant that she was going to that. The doctors didn't think she would get there. But she did.

"I had seen her in the hospice on the Sunday before when she gave me a load of instructions about how I had to carry on Kevin's case. To be honest, when I walked away on that day I didn't think I was going to see her again. But we went up there on the Monday and got her ready. Did some work with the hairbrush and put her make-up on."

Q: What were you able to do for your mother after she died?

"After the first inquests had recorded verdicts of accidental death, my mum refused to pick up Kevin's death certificate until the truth about his death was recognised. She did not live to see the later inquest verdicts in 2016 of unlawful killing. That's when I was finally able to collect Kevin's death certificate on my mum's behalf. I felt so relieved seeing it. With the verdict of unlawful killing on it."

Q: Why did you give this project your blessing?

"A few people had shown interest in making a TV drama and I always said no. It wasn't the right time. Kevin Sampson came up to see me and when he explained everything I thought, 'Oh yeah.' He sent me a few scenes he had written and said, 'Just give me a chance and read them. This is how I'm going to do it.' That's when I finally agreed to it. I was fully consulted all of the way through.

"I wanted people to see how things had been covered up. And what Hillsborough had actually done to families. In our case it wasn't just about losing Kevin. It had a wider impact and ended a marriage. The campaigning became like a full time job to my mum."

Q: Did you meet Maxine Peake, who plays your mother?

"Maxine came out to see me before she started filming and we shared a bottle of wine. She had seen lots of my mum's interviews on TV and so on. But she wanted to know from my point of view and the rest of the family's what she was like as a mum and a person.

"When I first saw Maxine dressed up as my mum I thought, 'Oh, that's strange.' But when you look back at the drama and see how it's been done, Maxine has done an amazing job. They all have."

Q: How do you feel having seen the finished drama?

"I was really pleased at the way it's been done. It's been done really well. As a result of the later inquests and the unlawful killing verdicts people are aware about the lies that were told. It shows what my mum went through and what other families also went through. The way we were all treated."

INTERVIEW WITH SARA WILLIAMS CONTINUED

Q: Have the Hillsborough victims and their families received any justice?

“It’s just heartbreaking. The lawyers said after the unlawful killing verdicts that the families would probably get no more than that. I don’t think any family wanted anyone to go to prison. But it was admitted at the later inquests that people had lied. Yet no-one has ever been convicted of manslaughter or perverting the course of justice in relation to the Hillsborough deaths.. That is the most upsetting thing, more than anything else. After all of the lies that were told.

“If they had admitted at the time they had made serious mistakes it would have made it easier. Instead there was a long fight to uncover the truth. My mum always said the same. She said, ‘They could have admitted right away they made a massive mistake and they were sorry.’ Instead they lied and tried to cover up the truth.”

Q: At the heart of this story are all of those lives lost and what might have been?

“Kevin would have been 49 in 2022. There are young people today who don’t know about the story of Hillsborough because it has gone on for so long. And others who still believe the lies. You can never remind people enough about what really happened on that day and in the years that followed. I hope my mum’s story inspires others who are also facing injustice.”



INTERVIEW WITH MAXINE PEAKE

Q: What were your thoughts when you were first approached about taking the role?

“It was a feeling of excitement. Those moments don’t come along that often. When your agent rings and says, ‘An offer has come in. There is a script for you to read. Would you be interested? It’s to play the Hillsborough campaigner Anne Williams.’ I said yes straight away.

“First and foremost, I love projects where I get to play real life people. It’s always rich and fascinating with endless material and possibilities. I didn’t know a lot about Anne. But I knew what she had achieved with the other families and survivors. I felt really flattered and honoured that I’d been thought of as a person who could do justice, hopefully, to Anne’s story.”

Q: Do you have any personal memories of the day of the Hillsborough disaster?

“I would have been around the same age as Anne’s son Kevin at the time of Hillsborough in April 1989. It was such a beautiful day, I would have been out and about in Bolton. But I do remember it being on the news in the evening and it taking a while for the severity of it to sink in. At first, in my ignorance, thinking, ‘Oh that’s a football thing. Something terrible has happened at a football match.’ Not realising the actual unravelling of events and what had actually caused the unlawful killings. It was only as things started to filter through I realised it was much more than that.”

Q: You met Anne’s daughter Sara. What did you want to know about her mother?

“I wanted to get Sara’s impression of her mum. What’s really struck me so much about playing Anne and the amazing people I’ve met - friends, family, survivors - is the impact that Hillsborough has had. Not just on the people who were lost and the people that were injured. But also the legacy of that trauma which passes down from generation to generation. I wanted to know what that meant to Sara. Her mum being so focused in obtaining justice for Kevin and for all of the 96, now 97, victims.

“I just wanted to know what she was like as a mum to Sara and how Sara felt about her mum being so dedicated. And what impact that had. How Sara was involved in that.

“Sara came to watch filming at Anfield for the scenes of Anne attending her final Hillsborough memorial there just before she died. You are playing a role and you want to show the utmost respect. These people have opened up their lives and their trauma with nothing more than generosity and cooperation. You as an actor are dipping into something.

“I hate calling acting a job because it is much more than a job. You have a duty of care. These are people and their real lives. Not to feel that, ‘All of a sudden I’m playing this character so I’m in the middle of all this trauma.’ It’s storytelling first and foremost. As a performer, my first thing is my respect to the story. It’s not about ‘my great performance’. It’s about how is the best way that I fit in to this storytelling of this amazing story, an amazing woman and an amazing family? And survivors, friends and family. An amazing group of people who were brought together by this disaster.

“It felt great to have Sara there because she has been so supportive, along with the rest of the family members. I knew how difficult it would be for them. But there was something about them being there and that solidarity that actually made it a lot easier. While obviously we were very conscious of what effect it was having on them.”

Q: Did you speak to anyone else before filming the role?

“I didn’t want to rake things up for people. I think people felt they had done a lot of talking. There had been 30 years of people talking and trying to get things to change. But I did speak to some others and researched the various publications on Hillsborough. And the practical facts about what happened. What would Anne know? What everyone said about Anne was what an amazing legal eagle she was. She knew the legalities inside out. We didn’t have time to show all of it - but how she studied. The real breadth of work she did. Learning from scratch about the legal system was extraordinary. And that’s no mean feat.”

INTERVIEW WITH MAXINE PEAKE CONTINUED

Q: What were some of the challenges you faced in portraying Anne?

“You think, ‘Am I really the right person to play Anne?’ I’m not from where Anne is from. I can sometimes be a little bit possessive about stories that are set in my locality. Because I do think very much where you are born and where you live shapes you. Your environment shapes you. I think sometimes we can be a bit flippant about it. Especially in acting. Whether it be urban or rural, wherever we grow up has a big impact on our development as a human.

“But all I wanted to do was hope I could capture the essence of Anne. And that people who knew her felt, in some way, I had done Anne justice. I wouldn’t say in many ways I’m a spiritual person. But I met a lot of people doing this who were very spiritual. I was very impressed by the spirituality and envious in a way of the comfort it brought. But especially Anne and her relationship with Bishop James Jones. So, you think that maybe somewhere she is watching and I just want her to be pleased. I want her to go, ‘Yeah, that’s OK.’ But again, the story is the biggest element.”

Q: How would you describe Anne before Hillsborough?

“People said she was an ‘ordinary mum’. She was living a happy family life with husband Steve and the kids. They would have friends and family over for parties at the weekend. They were a really happy family. Steve and Anne were both into their music, a bit cool and a little bit alternative. But at the end of the day just getting on with working hard, bringing up three children and creating a very secure family environment. And then Hillsborough happens and everything changes.”

Q: Even for those who know the details of Hillsborough well, it is still shocking to be reminded about the way people were treated in the immediate aftermath of the disaster?

“If we were watching that on the news from another country, we’d go, ‘Oh, that wouldn’t happen here.’ You’ve got to be constantly reminded of what does happen here and how we did treat people. Families trying to find out if their loved ones were still alive were treated in an appalling way. I was gobsmacked when I read it and then did research on it. I thought, ‘What civilised society puts victims through this process?’”

Q: What was the catalyst that sparked her campaign for the truth?

“Anne discovered her son Kevin could have been saved. Eventually it was reported that over 40 victims could have been saved with basic first aid, listing the failures of the authorities to get the appropriate help into the ground. Kevin could still have been here today.”

Q: How did Hillsborough impact on Anne and husband Steve’s marriage?

“It eventually ended their marriage. They still loved each other very deeply and you felt that very much throughout, doing the research and talking to people. But I think it’s very difficult to be with a partner who has become so focused on a campaign. I don’t know how you manage that focus and dedication to a cause like Anne was involved in and keep a relationship going. Especially when people move on to a different path. I think Steve found that difficult. Even though he wanted the same things that Anne did I don’t feel he could dedicate his time and so much effort. It felt very much like Anne gave over her life to getting justice.

“Steve was Kevin’s stepfather but he was like a son to him. They had such a good relationship. Stephen Walters, who plays Steve, is extraordinary. He is such a wonderful actor.”

INTERVIEW WITH MAXINE PEAKE CONTINUED

Q: Anne faced countless setbacks. Why did she never give up?

“I haven’t got children so I don’t know but I can imagine very much what that connection to a child is. What that can feel like when your child has been taken away from you in such a horrendous way at so young an age. And to want the people in charge who, we know, lied and covered up constantly, for them to turn round and admit what they have done was wrong.

“I used to think, ‘How do people carry on with this fight for justice?’ Because it affected families and your mental health when you’re constantly being lied to and pushed away and doors are being shut. When you’re seeing people in authority closing ranks. But that kept her going.

“Injustice is something that really makes me furious. Whether it’s friends, family, people I’ve never met, things that you hear about. That’s what presses my buttons when there is injustice. We know what goes on. It’s a constant cycle throughout history. A constant battle. You look at Hillsborough, you look at Peterloo, you look at Grenfell. It’s something we are continually fighting. When the establishment decides on who gets justice and who doesn’t.

“We are constantly being lied to today. It’s become the norm. Who has the strength to break through that? Because we just get weighed down and weighed down. It does feel like we are in some parallel universe. We have been lied to so much and these people can continue with lying in the face of the facts and the truth to the people who have put them there. We’re just bombarded with it.

“When you look at Hillsborough, people, parents, sisters, brothers, friends, make that difference. It feels like a superhuman strength to take on the establishment and it is getting worse.”

Q: The drama is called ‘Anne: One Mother’s Story.’ There are many others?

“Anne’s story was chosen for this drama. But it’s not just Anne. She was one of many, many men and women that dedicated their life to this and did so much to fight for justice. In terms of getting involved and activism, sometimes it’s just about stemming the flow. You can’t always stop the flow. But you can stem it and make little changes that are important. Because those little chips eventually bring down the walls. It’s a slow, arduous process. But that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t continue with it.”

Q: What was it like filming at locations like Hillsborough and Anfield?

“There’s a scene in the drama where Anne goes to Hillsborough with a radio crew. I remember getting really overwhelmed filming that. It was quite harrowing at Hillsborough. Looking at how the ground is now and people pointing to the areas where things happened and talking through it.

“Then shooting that last memorial service at Anfield that Anne attended only days before she died. That was emotional. Sometimes you have to go, ‘Why am I getting upset? Is Maxine getting overwhelmed by what’s happening?’ Sometimes you have to rein it in and go, ‘How would Anne really have felt?’ Even before playing Anne, every time I hear You’ll Never Walk Alone, it’s really emotional. I couldn’t keep a dry eye.

“Filming scenes of that day in September 2012 when the Hillsborough Independent Panel finally reported the truth of what happened was just extraordinary. Bishop James Jones, who chaired the panel, was so generous with his time. I did a lot of chatting to him about Anne. He is an extraordinary man.

“People felt so passionate about filming this drama and so involved and engaged in it. They just wanted to be a part of it. We all knew how much it meant.

INTERVIEW WITH MAXINE PEAKE CONTINUED

“Everyone was there because they really wanted to be a part of this storytelling and everybody was so integral to the whole thing. They were so focused and dedicated. Coming together to do their best. Everyone was very sensitive about the subject matter. Very respectful.

“I met some amazing people who came down to set to chat and talk about Anne. There was so much love and respect for her. You dip into a small part of somebody’s life and then, at the end of the day, you go home and you finish. I had that privilege. I got to see a bit through Anne’s eyes and I got to represent this woman and meet these amazing people. But at the end of the day I can turn that off and go to bed. And you realise that for other people this doesn’t go away.”

Q: No-one has ever been convicted of manslaughter or perverting the course of justice in relation to the Hillsborough deaths. What are your views on that?

“The mind boggles sometimes. You think, ‘Why couldn’t they admit that? Why couldn’t they admit they were wrong? Why couldn’t somebody stand up and go - we made a huge mistake. We were at fault here. It won’t bring your loved ones back but we are sorry?’ I think that’s all the families wanted. The families just wanted the truth and justice. That is devastating.

“We had to delay broadcasting this drama because of various court cases. It’s been frustrating. We didn’t want to cause any problems but we obviously want people to see this. We’re not telling anything that isn’t already in the public domain. This is Anne’s story. A series of events. But all of the facts are out there already. At least the families and others can talk again about Hillsborough now the court cases are over. Our justice system is not fit for purpose a lot of the time.”

Q: In July 2021 Andrew Devine became the 97th victim of the disaster when he died after suffering severe brain damage at Hillsborough. Another reminder of the long term impact of that day?

“His death was so sad. Of course we, quite rightly, think about the now 97 victims of Hillsborough. But the ripples go on and on for the families and survivors having to live with all of the complex questions and feelings that get thrown up. Mental health has suffered. How many people have lost their lives because they have felt they cannot go on anymore after what they witnessed? It’s a very difficult journey for those people. They must also never be forgotten about. There are so many people who can never move on.”

Q: Why is it important to tell this story over 32 years after the Hillsborough disaster?

“We must remind people of what happened. We must never forget. Because it isn’t over. These constant battles of the people against the establishment are not going anywhere. And they’re going to get harder and fiercer and demand more strength and commitment from people. You look around the country and there are people taking on these battles in big and small ways. We need to tell those stories of individuals who are taking on the status quo.

“It’s part of the people’s history of this country and very important that it’s not forgotten. I have had people say to me, ‘Oh, it’s 30 years ago. People need to move on.’ But it feels to me the trauma just goes through generation to generation.

“There are some extraordinary human beings in the story of Hillsborough. Starting with what the fans did on the pitch on the day to try and save others. Doing a job the emergency service should have been doing. Those people were so selfless and yet then faced terrible lies in the media about what had happened.

INTERVIEW WITH MAXINE PEAKE CONTINUED

“It’s important we get these stories across into people’s living rooms. I have got so much faith in human nature. We can be the cruellest. But we can be the kindest and most amazing. I’m always surprised by people’s generosity and kindness and selflessness. It wasn’t just people in Liverpool. It was nationwide and worldwide that people wanted to get involved and show their support.”

Q: How do you reflect back on being involved with this production?

“I feel very lucky and honoured to have played Anne. These roles are real gifts because they are bigger than just a job and the time you are on set or the drama being screened afterwards. I’ve done a few of these roles where I’ve got to meet brilliant people through them. And those relationships are something you take with you. It’s not a case of just switching them off after you finish. Somebody gave me that gift of being able to step into Anne’s shoes and represent her.

“I was very nervous about playing Anne because she is so very special. As all of the families are who worked so hard for justice and are held in such high esteem in Liverpool. It’s a very compassionate, proud city and I thought, ‘How would they feel about it?’ But when I was filming everyone in Liverpool was so lovely and supportive. And all of the local actors were just brilliant. It was difficult but we were also celebrating these people and their achievements.

“As every good job does, it opens up different dimensions. You take something away from it, not just from the people you’ve played but also from the people you meet along the way. The stories, the experiences. That’s why I feel very lucky as an actor because you get a lot of experiences that most people probably don’t have on a day to day basis. I feel very honoured to have met the people I have met along the way who have shared their stories.”



INTERVIEW WITH STEPHEN WALTERS

Q: You were the same age as Kevin Williams at the time of the Hillsborough disaster. What are your memories of that day?

“I was preparing for my GCSEs at the time of Hillsborough. In those days there were just four TV channels. For a kid of 15, watching Grandstand on BBC One on Saturday afternoons was a ritual. So I was watching Grandstand and I remember the news filtering through from Hillsborough. Remembering that back then there was no internet, no mobile phones and no social media. Had Hillsborough happened now there would be so much mobile phone footage and the truth of what happened would have been known much sooner.

“I also have a memory of my dad’s brother, my uncle John. His son John went to every game and he was at that game. I remember the phone call asking if he was OK. Things like that. Very clear and vivid. And subsequently my dad’s best man, his son died at Hillsborough. Everyone in Liverpool had some kind of emotional memory of that day. It is one of those questions: ‘Where were you and what were you doing on the day of Hillsborough?’”

Q: You also played young victim Ian Glover in Jimmy McGovern’s award-winning 1996 drama Hillsborough. What are your memories of filming that?

“My main memories of it were meeting the Glover family. John and Teresa and Joe, bless him. Joe was Ian Glover’s brother and he died 10 years after Hillsborough. I went to meet them, got to know them and stayed in touch. They had a warmth and openness, very similar to Anne Williams’ family. They couldn’t be more helpful. They couldn’t do enough for you. Considering what they had gone through there was no question out of bounds. That’s what I remember about them. I was devastated when I found out Joe had died.”

Q: What was your reaction when you were approached about taking the role of Steve Williams?

“I actually asked to be involved. I threw my name in the hat, saying I really feel like I want to read for Steve. I just connected to that part and those scenes. So I went in and met the director Bruce Goodison, who was great and did a really good job on it, producer Julia Stannard and casting director Jill Trevellick. We read some scenes and a couple of weeks later they rang and offered me the part.

“I was quite well versed in all things Hillsborough. But although I had heard the name Anne Williams I didn’t really know about her. I knew the script was going to be good when I saw it was written by Kevin Sampson because he had a history with it too. He was the right man for the job, emotionally and mentally. I’d also worked with him before. So I knew Kevin was a brilliant writer. Then I read the script and you couldn’t fail to be moved.

“Not only is Kevin a brilliant writer because he was at Hillsborough and had all of the personal recollections and the history, he is an authentic voice. He was definitely the right man to write a script such as Anne.”

Q: Did you meet Steve Williams before filming the role?

“It was one of the things that was top of my list when I was offered the role. I thought, ‘I have to meet him.’ Kevin Sampson was kind enough to set up a meeting with him. I think I was there for about five or six hours. We immediately bonded - we both play guitar, Steve and I. So I saw his guitar and he’s into the blues as well. We bonded as people immediately.

INTERVIEW WITH STEPHEN WALTERS CONTINUED

“There were no questions out of bounds about Anne or Kevin or the day, the aftermath or anything. Steve was brilliant. And just to meet him - you soak up anything as an actor, anyway. It was just his little ways, his gestures and mannerisms. He had a quietness about him as well. A stoicism about him that I wouldn't have maybe pictured had I not met him. He had a really soft voice as well. All of those things came in the mix and inspired and informed choices.

“I think Steve was just very proud of Anne. He said, ‘I never stopped loving her.’ They were still in constant communication when she died. They never lost their love and they never lost their humour. Often when you love someone and then something like that happens, for whatever reason or a multitude of reasons, you can't in the end live with them. But you never stop loving them.

“What this story does really well is it shows the complexity of how we internalise grief. We all react to grief in different ways. Steve was just very internal and retreated into himself. That was how he coped. And yet he was fully aware he had this partner, who he adored, who was very quiet in private but Anne also had the campaign face. She could talk. She could do interviews, she could speak from platforms. The total antithesis to Steve.

“You both experience the same thing but it's like a fork. When you can see something happening but you can't do anything about it. The drama really shows that. Anne and Steve are both experiencing this thing but one's going left and the other's going right. And in the end it was impossible to bring those two things together.

“The key for me was meeting Steve. I read a lot to do with Hillsborough anyway and I also had the background having worked on Jimmy McGovern's initial film. Then once I met Steve that process continued until I finished. If I had any questions about a scene I would ask him. He couldn't have been more helpful and I am still in touch with him.”

Q: Do you approach playing a real person like any other role?

“You feel responsibility towards every role you take. But when you're playing somebody that exists, and if you're blessed enough to meet them as well, there is an immediacy to that. That is very much in the back of your mind. It's there. And it informs a lot. But at the same time we are in a drama and, to a degree, you have to let all of the things you've soaked up go. And then you have to let what you're then doing inform you and then it tells you what it needs to be. Even if that's just a connection with the actor you're playing opposite. Things are found that you, hopefully, are not expecting to find. It's a process.

“Of course you feel a responsibility when you're playing somebody that's a real person. But in other ways it's very much the same approach as if you were playing a character that is made up.”

Q: Steve initially told Kevin he could not go to the semi final but then changed his mind?

“We can never know how that would weigh on someone's shoulders. To have to live with that. Even though your intellect probably knows it's just a thing you would say. But when it becomes a living embodiment of something that has happened, then it must be a real burden. It's the what if of anything and everything. It's that retrospect. The minutiae of our lives. On any given day you go left or you go right, you say this or you don't say that. We all live with that.”

INTERVIEW WITH STEPHEN WALTERS CONTINUED

Q: Steve and Anne's life together, like so many others, changed forever on that day in April 1989. How would you describe their relationship up to that point?

"If you see photos of them, they have the long hair, the beads. Steve said to me, 'We were like two hippies.' They were into 60s' music. He told me their song was 'Into The Mystic' by Van Morrison. Every morning I filmed I would listen to that song. It just sums up who they were. That was their song. It's about the mystic, it's about love and all of those things you would have in a loving relationship. Whenever I hear that song now it always has a subtle meaning for me.

"I have been in a relationship where it hasn't worked out and one of the things is that if you love somebody, you never stop loving that person. Because you were invested so much. It's just that certain things got in the way and you couldn't live with that person anymore. For me, in a nutshell, that's really what the breakdown of a relationship is and why it is."

Q: What was it like playing opposite Maxine Peake as Anne?

"When I was offered the part, my first thought was, 'Who's going to play Anne?' It had to be a terrific actress to do justice to that part. And also I'm going to have to connect to whoever is playing Anne for it to work. So thank goodness we did connect as friends. We just got on as people. From the outset we said to each other, 'I've got your back and you have mine.' And we had that. It was one of those jobs for both of us. One of those rare ones where you were affected in so many ways by the person you're working with and what it's about. It left a mark on all of the cast who were fortunate enough to be involved."

Q: There is, of course, no comparison whatsoever with real life events, but filming must have been a very emotional process for both cast and crew?

"You have to be aware that we are there to do a drama and do a job. But I have a son who is younger than Kevin and it really hits home more because of that. I was coming home sometimes and thinking about Kevin and what Anne and Steve lost. And the conversations I had with Steve. That hit me hard. That was an emotional thing."

Q: It is still deeply shocking to be reminded yet again by this drama of the scale of loss that afternoon and the way people were treated?

"It's disgusting. Phil Scraton, who led the Hillsborough Independent Panel's research team, used the analogy of animals being led into a pen. There was so much mismanagement. It's hard to believe there could be incompetence on that scale. When you think about it now, you think, 'How did that happen?'

"Then on top of that you had the cover up and the lies, the untruths at every level. Phil Scraton talks about not just corruption in a general sense, there was a personal corruption. A vested interest with certain people. Keeping hold of their jobs.

"So these poor families who have lost their loved ones - on top of that they are having the finger of suspicion and blame pointed at them. It's just unbelievable. The agony was prolonged and the lies were inflated. Now everybody knows what actually happened and the fans were totally blameless."

INTERVIEW WITH STEPHEN WALTERS

Q: No-one has ever been convicted of manslaughter or perverting the course of justice in relation to the Hillsborough deaths. What are your views on that?

“I think it’s hard for any lay person to comprehend that. There is an admittance and yet no-one is culpable. When it comes to Hillsborough and other incidents like Hillsborough, it seems like no-one is held accountable. It makes you ponder the bigger questions about conspiracy and cover up.

“It’s the Anne Williams of this world who question things from the start. Looking at discrepancies and questioning things. That’s something we can take from this. Never take anything at face value. Always ask your own questions and, if you can, do your own investigation.”

Q: Why is it important to remind people of Hillsborough and keep telling stories like this?

“I have a young son who is old enough now to understand. But he didn’t know what Hillsborough was. So I talked to him about it. You hope that any generation coming through learns from the mistakes of the past so that history does not repeat itself. That is one of the main reasons why Hillsborough and people like Anne Williams should always be spoken about. Anne being a beacon of something that is correct, that is right, that is for the truth.

“And some people still don’t understand what actually happened and deny the facts. I don’t believe ignorance is bliss. I think ignorance is just stupid. I think the reality and truth of something is too much for some people. They don’t want to believe in a world where such a thing as that could happen. So they would prefer to stay ignorant or naive to it because the reality would be too much for them.

“There are now 97 victims of Hillsborough. Not forgetting the 766 who were injured. On top of that you have the people who were at the game who were mentally, psychologically, spiritually damaged or affected for life. There must be an untold number of stories that we will never know about. People who were never the same again. The ripple effect is unknown.”

Q: This drama is called Anne: One Mother’s Story. There are many others related to Hillsborough?

“If anything was the embodiment of all of those other women then it would be Anne. They were Trojans. If you had to sum up what the legacy of Anne was, for me it was the love of her son. It was about love. Because without love she couldn’t have done what she did. She couldn’t have gone and spoken to experts, given speeches and did what she went on to do. So I think the power of that and the power all of those families had is part of that legacy.

“There a line, ‘They picked on the wrong people and the wrong city.’ Those families and the people of Liverpool continued fighting. The memory of Hillsborough and people like Anne will never be forgotten. But it was only because of their resilience and strength that dragged it as far as it could go.

“In as much as there was a cover up and a lot of bent things going on, there were also people to help Anne along the way in terms of unearthing and uncovering certain facts and injustices. But only through her determination to get the truth. And we see that unfold in this drama. This is also a story about good people.”

INTERVIEW WITH STEPHEN WALTERS

Q: How would you sum up Anne Williams and what she achieved?

“She was a remarkable woman. Her daughter Sara said, ‘You would have got on with my mum.’ Which I thought was a lovely thing to have said. The overriding thought I had after the job was that I never knew Anne but it would have been a privilege to have met her. Also getting to know Steve as well, I felt like I got to know Anne in some way. That’s what I personally took from this.

“What I also take from Anne is that we’re all dealt cards sometimes in life. It’s what you do with those cards. And what she did was remarkable. It really was. Bringing it back to the love of a child knows no bounds. It will walk through fire. Her courage, her quest for the truth, standing up to governments, media and the police. An absolutely remarkable lady.”

Q: How do you reflect back on being involved with this drama?

“On a personal level, it’s about the people I met. Sometimes on jobs you are blessed to meet certain people and you stay in touch. I’m still in touch with a lot of people.

“You just feel proud to have been a part of this production. Another reminder not to forget Hillsborough. That we should always remember what governments, police and others in authority are capable of. It’s a really important story about uncovering injustices and finding truth.”

EPISODE ONE SYNOPSIS



Fifteen year old Kevin Williams (Campbell Wallace) is a huge Liverpool FC fan. He's desperate to go to the semi-final against Nottingham Forest at Hillsborough stadium in Sheffield and begs his mum, Anne Williams (Maxine Peake) and step-dad Steve Williams (Stephen Walters), to let him go. They are uneasy about letting Kevin go to away games, but they see how badly he wants to go. They relent and on Saturday 15th April 1989 Kevin travels to the match with his friend Andy. When he doesn't return home, and following reports of fatalities from the terrible overcrowding at the game, Anne and Steve drive to Sheffield to try to find him.

They are eventually led to a room full of polaroid's and asked to identify their son from among the faces of the dead. Traumatized and grief stricken, they attend the inquest into Kevin's death expecting answers. But the evidence they hear at the inquest throws up even more questions.

Anne and Steve's confusion is reinforced by a visit from an Inspector the day after the inquest. He says he has come to clear up some details they may have heard the previous day, and explains how the witness evidence is at odds with the medical evidence.

After an overall verdict of accidental death for all 95 people who died at the match, Anne can't let her anger and frustration rest. In the hope of finding other families like her who believe justice has not been done, she joins the Hillsborough Family Support Group.

CAST CREDITS

Anne.....MAXINE PEAKE
Steve.....STEPHEN WALTERS
Kevin.....CAMPBELL WALLACE
Young Sara.....ELLIE DAVIES
Sara.....LILY SHEPHERD
Michael.....BOBBY SCHOFIELD
Sheila Coleman.....CLARE CALBRAITH
DannyMARK WOMAK
SandraJANE HOGARTH
John GloverROB JARVIS
Theresa GloverPOLLY HIGHTON
Bob JonesROGER MORLIDGE
Ann AddlingtonPOLLY KEMP
Andy DunanMATTHEW ROBERTS
PatMARY DUFFY
PaulaADELLE LEONCE
Barry DevonsideMARTIN WALSH
PC GlaveSIMON WILSON
Father Short.....MARK ARENDS
Sergeant KillochASHLEY EMERSON
Steffan PopperSTEPHEN CRITCHLOW

CAST CREDITS CONTINUED

Dr David Slater	ROGER RINGROSE
Inspector Sawers.....	MARK DEXTER
Mr McGrath	RICHARD HANSELL
PC Derek Bruder.....	DAVID WALMSLEY
Deborah Martin.....	GRACE KELLY
Ed Fitzgerald.....	STEPHEN CAMBELL MOORE
Lord Justice Cowan.....	RICHARD DURDEN
David Alford.....	ROGER MAY
Steve Hart.....	RAYMOND WARING
Malcolm Thornton.....	PAUL MCGANN
Jack Straw.....	TOM GOODMAN HILL
Slr Murray Stuart Smith.....	NICHOLAS JONES
Peter Camey.....	LENNY WOOD
Elkan Abrahamson.....	ELLIOT LEVEY
Christian Spooner.....	ROBERT LONSDALE
Andy Burnham.....	MATHEW MCNULTY
LFC Steward.....	STEVE WEAVER
Radio City Presenter.....	NATALIE GRADY
Hairdresser.....	LISA DAINTRY
News Reporter MM.....	DEAN SMITH
News Reporter.....	REGINALD EDWARDS

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Executive Producer.....	SIMON HEATH
Writer.....	KEVIN SAMPSON
Director.....	BRUCE GOODISON
Producer.....	JULIA STANNARD
Line Producer.....	TRACIE WRIGHT
Director of Photography.....	ADAM GILLHAM
Casting Director.....	JILL TREVELLICK
Costume Designer.....	JOHN KRAUSA
Make Up Designer.....	ADELE FIRTH
Production Designer.....	MARK LEESE
Art Director.....	PAWLO WINTONIUK
Sound Recordist/Mixer.....	KIERON WOLFSON
Script Editor.....	LUCY ROCH
Editors... ..	KIM GASTER & JOE CAREY
First Assistant Director.....	JAKE ROLLINS
Second Assistant Director.....	JOHN TURNER
Location Manager.....	MIKE HIGSON
Production Manager.....	JAMES YOUD





THE REAL ANNE: UNFINISHED BUSINESS

ITV Factual

This is a World Productions programme for ITV

"She used to say to me, if they tell you that they can't find it, they're lying, if they tell you they don't know where it is, they're lying, and you can't ever let them grind you down." - **Anne's friend Charlotte Hennessy, whose dad James died at Hillsborough**

This documentary accompanying new ITV drama *Anne* focuses on Hillsborough campaigner Anne Williams, who strived for decades to get justice for the 97 football fans who died in the disaster.

Anne's 15-year-old son Kevin died watching the game he loved on April 15, 1989 and, until her death in 2013, Anne spent her life campaigning for justice for the families who lost loved ones that day.

Presented by Maxine Peake, who stars as Anne in the drama, this brand new film features the campaigner's family, friends, survivors, and footballer John Barnes who was on the pitch at the Sheffield stadium and attended fans' funerals.

Among the contributors depicted by actors in the drama are Reds fan Steve Hart, who tried to carry Kevin to safety, the former Bishop of Liverpool James Jones, and Liverpool-born politician Andy Burnham.

The documentary tells the story of her campaign, from the aftermath of the disaster right through to the final criminal trials, more than 30 years later, of former police officers and officials. Anne's daughter Sara reveals the true cost of her mother's struggle, and how the heartbreak and trauma of successive failed appeals and the campaign for new inquests took a massive toll on their family.

With previously unseen archive footage of Anne herself, exclusive interviews and the first ever public broadcast on national television of pivotal moments in court featuring police match commander David Duckenfield, the programme aims to provide a deeply personal insight into a fearless campaigner driven by a mother's love and her desire for truth.

Former Liverpool winger John Barnes talks through his perspective on the pitch, as the scale of the unfolding tragedy emerged while Nottingham Forest lined up to take a corner early in the FA Cup semi-final: *"I'm on the post. You look to your right. They were pushed up against the fence. By now it looked very uncomfortable and I am now going, 'That doesn't look right.'"*

Inside the central pen in the Leppings Lane end, where fans poured in after police ordered a gate to be opened, Steve Hart says those caught in the crush were starting to struggle to breathe: *"I could feel my chest, I thought it was going to explode. Like somebody tightening a vice but they're very slowly turning it so you can feel your whole body, the life's just ebbing out of it."*

THE REAL ANNE: UNFINISHED BUSINESS

While fans from the tier above frantically grabbed those lucky enough to escape the pen above others' heads, people began to spill onto the pitch as fans attempted to save those caught in the crush. Among them was Anne's son, Kevin, who was picked up by other fans and carried away. One of those fans was Steve Hart, who managed to escape the crush, and says: *"Get down the other end of the pitch, we see a police officer standing there, literally we're asking him where do we put him? And he told us to put him down and to f*** off down the other end of the ground. He was certainly alive when we put him there. There was no doubt about that."*

Anne's daughter Sara speaks about the immediate aftermath of Kevin's death: *"I think I'd got up that morning and obviously me mum and dad had been up all night and I'd got into the room and his quilt was all rolled up, so I actually thought he was home. Complete shock and just seeing my mum distraught. It didn't seem real. Everything just changed within that week, just changed us forever."*

Yet in the aftermath, police sought to deflect blame from themselves and on to the fans - whose reputation was tarnished further by a front page story in The Sun claiming to tell the truth about their behaviour. Steve Hart says: *"For them to come out and say people were robbing from the dead and urinating on them, I mean nobody could be that low, I thought. It had no basis in truth, from the minute it was printed. It was a horrendous thing to do."*

Revisiting Hillsborough for the first time in the film is Val Yates, who explains the attitude of police following the disaster to Maxine: *"It's a bit mind-blowing to be honest, just seeing it, but it is so quiet. It was so noisy, so noisy then, you know. I've still got my ticket. Police after the match, they tried to confiscate it and they were saying they wanted it as evidence and I would not give them it, because I knew what they were trying to do. They'd already said drunken, ticketless, hooligans were responsible, and I refused to give him it as evidence. I just said, I know your game, you're not pinning this on us and I let him have a photocopy of it and I kept it."*

A 1991 inquest into how the victims died had returned a verdict of accidental death - a verdict Anne and the friends and families of the other victims would spend most of the next three decades fighting. This came into sharp focus when then-Culture Secretary and Liverpoolian MP Andy Burnham was speaking at the 20th anniversary memorial service in 2009 at Anfield, and the families in the crowd started chanting for justice. He describes the moment it started: *"There was just one cry, two thirds up the Kop. It took those voices off the Kop and into every single living room across Britain that night. And everyone heard how they felt."*

The day after the anniversary the government ordered that all Hillsborough documents should be made public, which led to the discovery that more than 200 police statements had been altered - and that as many as 41 of the victims could have been saved if there had been a faster, more adequate emergency response. The 1991 inquest was annulled, but by the time the accidental death verdicts were quashed in 2012, Anne was dying from cancer. Sara says: *"It just seemed so unfair. But she was still giving her orders out, I remember she just turned to me and said, 'You'll have to carry on Kevin's case now.'"*

THE REAL ANNE: UNFINISHED BUSINESS

The longest running inquests in British legal history ended with the 2016 inquest verdict that Hillsborough was no accident - catastrophic errors by individuals and the authorities had led to people's deaths. Steve Hart says: *"I remember just uncontrollably sobbing. And standing up on top of the wall and just shouting finally, finally, justice."*

Although no police officers have been convicted, the unlawful killing verdict meant the Williams family were finally prepared to collect Kevin's death certificate.

Sara says: *"My mum always said that she could have handled losing Kevin, she'd still have grieved and she still would have been devastated - but it was the cover up that did it more for her and probably for the rest of the families too."*



If you are to use any material from the press pack please include a TX credit for the drama and the factual documentary plus the ITV Hub .