



VERA

SERIES 14

# VERA

## SERIES 14 PRESS PACK CONTENTS

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VERA airs on ITV1 and STV at 8 pm on January 1 and 2, followed by the companion documentary *Vera farewell pet*, on January 3 at 9 pm.

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## SERIES INTRODUCTION

Renowned film, theatre, and television actress Brenda Blethyn OBE makes an emotional return for the fourteenth and final series of ITV's popular crime drama series *Vera*.

Spanning two epic feature-length episodes, these new stories, entitled *Inside* and *The Dark Wives*, intertwine gripping murder mysteries with the heartfelt narrative of Vera's personal journey.

Filmed in and around the North East, the strong ensemble cast reunited with Brenda includes David Leon as DI Joe Ashworth, Jon Morrison as DC Kenny Lockhart, Riley Jones as DC Mark Edwards, Sarah Kameela Impey as Pathologist Dr Paula Bennett, and Rhiannon Clements as DC Steph Duncan.

In the first episode, DCI Vera Stanhope (Brenda Blethyn) is called to the banks of the Tyne, where the body of a young man has been discovered by some anglers. A tangled web of a broken relationship, secret love, grudges, regret, and fraud begins to emerge. Has our former inmate been served cold justice, or does his death run deeper?

The final episode brings Vera back to a familiar place when a body is found at the foot of the legendary local stones, 'The Dark Wives'. With memories of childhood in the background, Vera must work hard to uncover the mystery of why a bright young student would be violently attacked and left so far from home. This poignant episode weaves together past and present, making for a compelling and emotional farewell.

Guest stars for this final series include Amanda Root, William Houston, Shobna Gulati, Clinton Blake, Joshua Sher, Michelle Holmes, Kevin Whately, Cathy Tyson, Jacoba Williams, George Beach, Alexandra Hannant, Victoria Elliott, Bryan Moriarty, Chelsea Halfpenny, Yazmin Kayani, Stevie Raine, Jonathan Icton, Freya Parks, Graeme Hawley, Charlotte Bradley, Sarah Priddy, Christopher Connel, Daren Morfitt, Anthony Flanagan, Kate Marvan, Tiegan Byrne, Gassan Abdulrazek, Sennia Nanua, Olwen May, Derek Thompson, Jacquetta May, Angela Bain and Jada Langley.

## SERIES INTRODUCTION

Produced by Will Nicholson on behalf of Silverprint Pictures for ITV, these two feature-length episodes have been directed by Claire Winyard and Paul Gay. Both episodes have been written by series regular Phil Mulryne with the final episode adapted from Ann Cleeves' latest novel, *The Dark Wives*, published in the autumn of 2024.

Silverprint Pictures Creative Director Kate Bartlett is the executive producer. *Vera* is produced in association with ITV Studios, which distributes *Vera* internationally. Silverprint Pictures is an ITV Studios company. Overseeing production on behalf of ITV is Drama Commissioner Huw Kennair-Jones.

Series 1-13 is available on ITVX.





## CHARACTER BIOGRAPHIES

### **DCI Vera Stanhope played by Brenda Blethyn**

Unconventional, fiercely intelligent and driven by uncompromising integrity, DCI Vera Stanhope sets the pace for her team with relentless determination and an unyielding desire to uncover the truth. Beneath Vera's gruff exterior and solitary lifestyle lies a deep empathy for victims, matched only by her uncanny ability to solve the most complex cases in the rugged and breathtaking Northumberland landscape. Vera's caustic wit and sharp instincts are tempered by a wry sense of humour and a soulful interior shaped by her troubled childhood. She commands fierce loyalty from her team, rewarding it with quiet affection and unspoken care. Vera's work is everything, and her team is the closest thing she has to family, making her decisions in this final series her most challenging and personal yet.

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

A dedicated and dependable detective, Joe Ashworth is Vera's steady right-hand man, balancing her eccentricities with his calm, level-headed demeanour. A devoted family man, Joe's strong moral compass and compassion make him the perfect counterbalance to Vera's more abrasive style. Known for his sharp investigative skills and empathetic approach to victims, Joe can often feel deeply incensed by the injustices he and Vera confront. Returning to the team as Detective Inspector, Joe brings fresh ideas, experience, and ambition from his time with the Met and GMP. His respect for Vera only grows as he learns from her unconventional brilliance. Still, their emotional dynamic often resembles that of a mother and son - though neither would ever acknowledge it. Vera sees Joe's ambition and potential but is conscious that his greatest challenge will be accepting help and mastering the art of patience. And she's aware that the recent death of his father may have affected him more than he is letting anyone know.

## CHARACTER BIOGRAPHIES

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

**Kenny** is a loyal and trusted member of the team. While he works at his own pace, Vera knows she can count on his years of experience and sharp instincts when it matters most. Plain-spoken, if occasionally tactless, Kenny has a remarkable memory and a strong connection to cases long past.

Surprisingly savvy with contemporary technology and social media, he proves himself adaptable despite his traditional approach. A true workhorse, the team would be lost without him.

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

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

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

Steph is energetic, committed, and thrives at the heart of an investigation. She loves being out in the field—meeting victims, interviewing suspects and witnesses, and chasing down new leads. Sitting at a desk and handling the day-to-day admin, however, is not her style and often 'gets on her nerves.' This dislike for the more routine aspects of modern policing can sometimes cause friction with both Vera and Joe, but Steph's impatience drives results and keeps the momentum going - there's no slowing down when she's on a case. With Joe's return, Steph has found both an ally and a mentor, helping her channel her energy while still pushing boundaries.



## CHARACTER BIOGRAPHIES

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

Paula's acerbic sense of fun blends seamlessly with her brilliant forensic brain and detail-driven approach. She's sometimes mistaken for indulging in dark humour, but actually, it's enthusiasm for the science of the investigation. She always has empathy when working a crime scene and never lets her emotions interfere with gathering facts - especially when an unusual death presents intriguing scientific challenges. Initially, Vera wasn't sure what to make of Paula's whirlwind energy, but over time, they've found mutual respect and a playful, productive working relationship.







## INTERVIEW WITH BRENDA BLETHYN

**Q: When did you decide this series of *Vera* would be your last and why?**

“It was a lovely summer back in 2023. And I came to realise I hadn’t had a summer with my husband for 14 years. Naturally I missed my family. And my dog Jack, although he was with me in the North East, but I didn’t see him much because I was working all day. I love my VERA family but I love my other family too. And when you consider I was already thinking about packing work in when I was offered the job back in 2010, fourteen series of working on *Vera* is pretty good going. I wasn’t actually going to do any more after series thirteen, but of course ITV said they needed to wind the series up. So I said, ‘Oh go on then, I’ll do a couple more episodes.’”

**Q: These final two films are a fitting conclusion to 56 feature length episodes across 14 series. They must have felt special for the cast and crew?**

“It felt extra special filming these final two films. We are all pretty close. Jon Morrison (DC Kenny Lockhart) has been there since the second episode of the first series and Riley Jones (DC Mark Edwards) came in on the fourth episode. It’s been a big part of their lives too.

“It’s sad saying goodbye to people in the cast and crew because they are so good, professional, and talented, and I love working with them. I wish there could have been an episode where I stayed at home in Kent: ‘Vera Goes South’. But, of course, the series is dyed in the wool Northumberland and the North East and I understand that’s where it has to be.”



## INTERVIEW WITH BRENDA BLETHYN CONTINUED

**Q: Regular *Vera* screenwriter Phil Mulryne has written the scripts for both of the final films?**

“Phil seems to get under the skin. He really does understand Vera and her world. When he wrote his first *Vera* script I thought, ‘He’s a find. He’s good.’ And if I do spot something that doesn’t feel organic he doesn’t mind if I pipe up. Because he wants to get it right.”

**Q: The first film ‘Inside’ brings Vera and ‘Lewis’ to the screen with an appearance by Kevin Whately as retired detective Gary Creelan?**

“Kevin and I have worked together before. We were in an award winning 2004 ITV drama called *Belonging* which had a fabulous cast. We played husband and wife in that. And we were also both in *Sunday For Sammy* on stage at the big arena in Newcastle. I loved the scenes between Vera and Creelan. We both held our own. I totally believed he was Gary Creelan. I forgot about Lewis. I believed he was Creelan.”

**Q: Other guests in the films include Chelsea Halfpenny, Cathy Tyson and Derek Thompson?**

“Chelsea Halfpenny is a terrific actress. She was wonderful to work with. Her aunt Jill Halfpenny played a guest role in the third series of *Vera*. Cathy Tyson is a legend. Along with Derek Thompson. I knew Derek way back when we were both at the National Theatre. I was very flattered when he agreed to do this. He said, ‘Oh, I love VERA. Yes, I’ll do it.’ Apart from being a great actor, Derek is the most wonderful raconteur. He could talk for England and you wouldn’t get bored for one second. He’s also a great musician.”

**Q: We also meet Shobna Gulati as new Chief Superintendent Khalon?**

“The new Chief Superintendent is rather severe on camera. But Shobna and I couldn’t stop giggling. In between takes we were laughing our heads off. At the start of the first film Chief Supt Khalon offers Vera a promotion. It’s about time! It’s taken 14 years for Vera to be offered promotion. She’s been the same rank throughout.”

## INTERVIEW WITH BRENDA BLETHYN CONTINUED

**Q: Northumberland and the rest of the region again plays its own crucial role in series 14?**

“Northumberland and the wider North East is so varied and beautiful. It’s not just one thing. It’s the seascapes, the landscapes, the moors, the cities. A lot of them steeped in history. And lively. It’s not for nothing that Newcastle is called the party town.

“I must have travelled tens of thousands of miles over the years going to all of the various locations. If I’d been on holiday that would’ve been great, but as it was, I’d get in the car at some unearthly hour in the morning and my head is in the script. And as I’m in almost every scene, I’m going through what I’m doing that day and then I get out of the car at the other end. So I’m not taking in the joys of sightseeing. But I always love everywhere we film. And the people are so nice.”

**Q: The relationship between David Leon’s Detective Inspector Joe Ashworth and Vera is highlighted in these two films?**

“There’s something up with Joe at the start of this series. He’s dragging his feet. Vera obviously has a soft spot for Joe. But she doesn’t carry people. Everyone has to pull their weight. And if there is something up, say what it is. Tell her what it is.

“We filmed a scene involving Vera and Joe on the St Mary’s Island causeway near Whitley Bay which is quite the exchange of words. There’s a history between them. In the very first episode of *Vera*, Joe scattered her father Hector’s ashes. It had a real impact on Vera. I love working with David. He only left after series four to pursue writing and directing, and no sooner had he done so that his film won an award at the Tribeca Film Festival. But he did return to direct an episode of *Vera*, *Black Ice*, series 8 episode 2.

## INTERVIEW WITH BRENDA BLETHYN CONTINUED

“I also loved working with Kenny Doughty who played Aiden Healy after David left. He joined on Series five and luckily stayed for eight series. We were buddies. And now David’s welcome return has allowed the writer to explore the full arc of Vera and Joe’s story.”

**Q: The series has always remained topical and that continues in series 14?**

“*Vera* has often tackled topical themes which is great. For example, the County Lines drugs issue in the story ‘Cuckoo’. Vera really gets to the nitty gritty.”

**Q: It feels right that the final episode is an adaptation of Ann Cleeves’ 11th and latest *Vera* novel *The Dark Wives*, published in August 2024?**

“I love Ann’s latest *Vera* book *The Dark Wives*. She is so clever. *The Dark Wives* are described in the book as three huge ancient standing stones rising on top of a rocky outcrop in the middle of Northumberland.

“When I first saw them, I thought, ‘Those stones must be ancient!’ And Geoff our props man said, ‘No Brenda, the art department made them and put them there.’ They looked so realistic. Must’ve been some feat getting them up there. They had to be in place in the middle of nowhere for two weeks. Sometimes I clambered up there or I was taken up in a 4x4 vehicle. I also had to run up there once on camera. It’s a good job I’m reasonably fit.

“The *Vera* sets are incredibly realistic. The incident room has been based in various locations. We were at Swan Hunter in Wallsend to start with. Then we moved along the road to Davy Bank and finished up in Killingworth. We film the exterior of Vera’s cottage on Holy Island but the interior is a studio set replica. Sometimes when filming in the interior of the cottage, I’d forget I was in the studio. I’d think I was out on Holy Island. It was copied so faithfully.”



## INTERVIEW WITH BRENDA BLETHYN CONTINUED

**Q: Ann dedicated *The Dark Wives* novel “to teens everywhere, and especially to the Dark Wives - uppity young women with minds of their own, struggling to find a place in a difficult world”. Vera sees echoes of herself in a missing teenage girl?**

“Aside from solving the murder of a charity worker at a private children’s home, the story involves finding a teenage girl called Chloe who has gone missing from the home. Where has she gone? Vera feels she has some sort of affinity with the lass and is desperate to find her. The TV adaptations are often slightly different to the books for various reasons. For example, there is a police character called Rosie Bell in the Ann’s book who is not in the screen version. While the police team on television has diverged from that in the books from very early on.”

**Q: Vera’s relationship with her father Hector has been at the core of the series since the start?**

“Vera and her father Hector never really saw eye to eye. After the death of her mother he more or less let Vera bring herself up. He used to take her with him when he went stealing birds’ eggs. She strongly disapproved of that. But he’s her dad. She was never going to shop him. Vera could criticise him but woe betide if anyone else did. That’s true to life, I think. We’re all like that as far as our family is concerned.”

**Q: Your reflections on Vera’s police team over the years?**

“Everyone working on the programme were important to the success of it. We’ve had lots of people who have gone on to bigger things. Kinglsey Ben-Adir, who played pathologist Dr Marcus Summer in 16 episodes between 2014 and 2018, went on to Hollywood. He’s played Bob Marley in the One Love film. Cush Jumbo, who played DC Bethany Whelan, is a big star.

## INTERVIEW WITH BRENDA BLETHYN CONTINUED

“Jodie Comer had a small part in one of the episodes. Sam Fender was our first murder victim in Series One. They - and many others - were all instrumental in making the show a success.

“There are also some nice moments in this final series involving Vera’s current team. Because the audience is saying goodbye to them too. Every single one has contributed so much to the series.”

**Q: It must have been emotional for both cast and crew filming certain scenes?**

“One scene involved Vera and DC Kenny Lockhart, played by Jon Morrison. It broke my heart when I read the script and it was emotional to film. Jon Morrison rang me up after it was all over. And he said, ‘I just wanted to thank you for giving us 14 years of work.’ What a gentleman. But I thanked him and told him I certainly wasn’t going to do any episodes without him. Which is true.”

**Q: The filming process is not chronological. But what was it like filming the last scene to be shot in the police incident room?**

“It was very appropriate that the last day of filming was scheduled to take place in the police incident room where so much of the drama has happened. I think our producer Will Nicholson contrived that. (Incidentally that is not where the final scene of the episode takes place). You could hear a pin drop when we were filming. Then when I heard, ‘That’s a wrap.’ I was emotional. As, indeed, Vera would have been.

“There were a lot of people behind the cameras and at the end I thanked everybody. I said, ‘We’re all as important as one another.’ I might be the one playing the title character but it’s only an ingredient in a great big pot. And all of the ingredients are necessary. Everyone contributes to it. And it’s the sum of all of those parts that made *Vera* a success.

And Vera will, of course continue to crack crime in Ann Cleeves’ books - and there will be 56 episodes available to watch on TV repeats.

## INTERVIEW WITH BRENDA BLETHYN CONTINUED

“I was with a friend one day and we were flipping through TV channels looking for something good to watch. We hit upon a drama that I had no recollection of having watched before and I said, ‘This looks good. Let’s watch this.’ My friend agreed. So we are watching it and then suddenly the door opens and Vera walks in. ‘Oh crikey!’ I thought and immediately switched channels. I was rather embarrassed because it seemed like I’d been looking for something to watch with me in it! I don’t even know what episode it was.”

### **Q: Your thoughts on working with the Vera team for 14 years?**

“A number of the crew have worked on Vera since the very start along with some of the supporting artistes. They were all very loyal. There was never an ego in sight. Everyone was skilled at their job and happy to be doing it. And they were nice people. So it really was a pleasure. People just couldn’t do enough for you. Nobody was complaining. And they work so hard, the crew.

“Whenever I ventured off from where we were filming on location someone commented ‘You always have security with you.’ I said, ‘What? No I don’t.’ And they said, ‘Of course you do.’ So then I paid attention and they were right! I hadn’t even noticed security following me. Looking after me. They’re making sure no harm came to me as I walk out into the crowd.’ Without being in my face. Such a skill.

“The fact that Vera provided employment for so many people was something I had to factor in when making a decision each year on whether to continue or not. Nobody imposed that on me. I was simply aware of it. And I knew everyone wanted to continue. I really enjoyed working on *Vera* and I’m not sure I’ve made the right decision even now!

“But I do want to spend time with my family. That’s the overriding factor in my decision making. I’m comforted by the fact that many of the crew live locally in the North East and, hopefully, there are lots of other jobs for them up there. Including the proposed Crown Works Studios in Sunderland which aims to create some 8000 jobs.”



## INTERVIEW WITH BRENDA BLETHYN CONTINUED

### **Q: And the *Vera* fans?**

“*Vera* fans have always been wonderful when watching filming on location. And I met lots of *Vera* fans when I opened the 2024 Summer Fete at the Charlotte Straker Residential, Nursing and Respite Home in Corbridge. I was at the charity event for around two hours as I was enjoying it so much and I was exhausted at the end. So many selfies. I also had some interesting chats with residents at the Home. They were great with lots of riveting stories to tell. What a lovely afternoon. I also met a fan named Christine who came all the way over from Australia to meet the *Vera* team.

“*Vera* is watched all around the world. It’s big in Japan, for example. Apparently Poirot has topped their viewing chart for 20 years but last year VERA took that position. and it was also lovely to hear about a young lady called Luna in China who is an avid *Vera* fan. I think the series translates in so many different countries because Vera is one of a kind.

“She’s a woman of a certain age, not dependent on lipstick or any love involvement. She’s still a little bit of an enigma. And the films concentrate on solving the case. Vera wants to understand why people commit the crimes they do. She listens. She’s fair. She’s good at her job. And all of the family can watch it.”

### **Q: The wrap party at the end of filming was held at Newcastle United’s football ground St James’ Park. That must have been a poignant event?**

“Oh boy, that was an emotional evening. For a start, just to be at St James’ Park with the floodlights on when there’s nobody there. It looks so vast. And here was the *Vera* team enjoying themselves in the bar. We had a great big cake shaped like Vera’s Landy. It was lovely. Everyone having a good time. And so nice that Ann Cleeves was there. Then once I got on the train home, crossing the Tyne and leaving Newcastle behind, it hit me. I was rather emotional.”

## INTERVIEW WITH BRENDA BLETHYN CONTINUED

**Q: Did you take any mementoes from the set in Killingworth?**

“I’ve got Vera’s mac and hat. I’ve also got one of her coats. They might come in handy if and when I turn up at a charity fundraiser. The producers also presented me a Montblanc pen because they know I’m an avid crossword puzzler.”

**Q: There are plans for the Vera costume and her Land Rover to be displayed in museums. How do you feel about that?**

“I think it’s great that *Vera* is being put in a museum! I just love it. I’d go and see it. That’d be wonderful. A lady who works in *The Ship Inn* on Holy Island where we filmed for *The Rising Tide* suggested someone should create ‘*Vera: The Musical*’ on stage. Stranger things have happened. A musical about a murder? Well, you’ve got *Sweeney Todd*, haven’t you?

“Jon Morrison used to burst into song sometimes and I was often breaking into a tap dance. They could drive the Land Rover on stage from the wings. I think we’re onto a winner there. I’d buy a ticket for that!”

**Q: How do you reflect back on your Vera journey?**

“I feel rather proud of myself. I’m glad that *Vera* was the success it was. And that other people must have been pleased with it too. ITV, for example, for it to go on for so long. And they would have carried on with it too had I wanted to. We’re all proud that *Vera* is a worldwide success.”

**Q: What will you miss most?**

“I do understand *Vera* because I’ve played her for so long. When you come to a new job, quite often with the nature of filming you have very little time. You turn up on day one and shoot a scene. And filming is not chronological so it’s hard to get under the skin of a character. While in the theatre you rehearse for a month and get to understand the character very well and it is performed chronologically.

## INTERVIEW WITH BRENDA BLETHYN CONTINUED

“While in the theatre you rehearse for a month and get to understand the character very well and it is performed chronologically.

“But it’s not the same in film and television. You’ve got to turn up knowing it and that’s it. You don’t get much time to interact with the other actors. But obviously for me *Vera* was different. Because I’ve been on it for so long I could enter her world more fully.”

### **Q: What’s next?**

“Since finishing *Vera* in July I’ve already completed a film written and directed by Paul Andrew Williams. I had no intention of embarking on something else so soon. But the filming in Yorkshire with Paul and co-starring Andrea Riseborough was imminent and irresistible. Apparently another actress had dropped out for personal reasons and they needed someone to replace her right away. So in the spirit of helping out I said, ‘Oh, let’s have a read of it.’ And I liked it.

“So I’m not retiring. Maybe semi-retired. I don’t want to be doing jobs which means going away for long periods of time. I’ve done that for the last 14 years. But, there again, never say never.

“On that last day of filming for *Vera* I couldn’t help thinking, ‘Oh, I’m making a mistake here. Why oh why, Brenda?’ Come March when I would normally be packing my bag to go back up north to film another series of *Vera*, I’ll probably be regretting my decision. But right here and right now, it’s the right one for me and my family.”





## INTERVIEW WITH PRODUCER & EXECUTIVE PRODUCER WILL NICHOLSON

**Q: How long have you worked on *Vera*?**

“I started working on *Vera* from series three and was then on the show on and off, working on other dramas, before I took over as producer from series nine.”

**Q: When did Brenda Blethyn tell you that series 14 would be her last?**

“A show like *Vera* is a massive undertaking for anyone. Brenda is in every single scene, every single day, for 100 days on the locations we film in. Brenda was up at 5am and then travelling an hour or more out to the location, on set all day in every single scene and then leaving when we wrapped at 7pm. Getting back to her apartment and having to prepare for the next day, it was a huge demand for Brenda and she was away from her family for most of the year. That said, she loves the show.”

“So we’ve had lots of conversations over the years. This time there was a conversation, broadly with ITV and everyone, that if *Vera* is going to come to an end we have to do the show justice. And no-one was more keen than Brenda to make sure that was done. We had a bit of time after series 13 and then there was a discussion had with enough time to develop two fantastic scripts for the last two episodes.”

**Q: What were your thoughts when the end of *Vera* was finally confirmed?**

“The overriding feeling for me was, ‘I want to do justice, from my perspective, to the show.’ I feel very blessed and honoured to have worked on such an iconic show in a region that I love, with all of the landscapes I love. I feel very lucky. So I wanted to do justice to the show. Therefore, predominantly for most of the time, I took my personal emotions out of it. Until they called ‘wrap’ on the last day.”

## INTERVIEW WITH WILL NICHOLSON CONTINUED

**Q: Brenda was also always aware of the implications of a decision to leave the role on the *Vera* crew and others?**

“She was very caring of that. Brenda has been the backbone of a huge ITV show for 14 years. She is *Vera*. It’s sold to 180 territories around the world and has been a financial success. Therefore it has come back every year. And that is largely down to Brenda’s brilliance.

“We’ve had people starting out from university who started on the show and are now Directors of Photography or whatever. The show has taken people from university through to head of department status. And some of the crew have been with *Vera* from the very start to the end.”

**Q: These final two films are a wonderful conclusion to a body of work which has produced 56 feature length episodes across 14 years. They must have felt special for the cast, crew and entire production team?**

“There was an extra special feeling among cast and crew while filming these final two films. The magic of *Vera* has been that everyone who works on the show feels a huge custodian of the brand. And they care so dearly about it. So they have always felt it’s very special. That may be down to the region we are in and there’s not a plethora of drama here. But everyone feels it is very special to work on *Vera*. So they come to the show with their A-game.

“I think people had a very similar feeling to me. These are the last two films. Let’s make it go out on the absolute highest of highs that it possibly can do. So, yes, it was special in that sense.”

## INTERVIEW WITH WILL NICHOLSON CONTINUED

**Q: Regular *Vera* screenwriter Phil Mulryne has written the scripts for both of the final films. What has he brought to this finale?**

“Phil Mulryne is a very special writer. He has the ability to write a compelling ‘story of the week’ and also make it very current and relatable. But more than that, he writes the character of *Vera* and the characters of the serial cast of *Vera* beautifully. From his very first draft of the very first episode he ever did we knew he had the DNA of the show in him. So these last two are superbly ‘Vera-fied’, if you can say that.

“Brenda also loves Phil as a writer. *Vera* is a very collaborative world so everyone feeds in to the script to make it the best it could possibly be. And you cannot do that without Brenda.”

**Q: The first film ‘Inside’ brings Vera and Lewis together with a guest cast appearance by Kevin Whately as retired detective Gary Creelan. How did that come about?**

“First of all, it was a huge honour for us that Kevin accepted to play that role. Creelan is a retired detective legend within the Northumberland and City Police. So we knew we had to cast someone like Kevin. And, to be honest, there was no-one else we wanted. So we knew that if we were lucky enough for him to accept then we would have some fantastic performances between him and Brenda. We just needed to find the cinematic location to introduce him. Which we did.

“Brenda is very much involved in a lot of things. I remember talking to her and she was super excited at the prospect of Kevin Whately playing the role. And then even more excited when he accepted.”



## INTERVIEW WITH WILL NICHOLSON CONTINUED

**Q: Other guest actors in the two films include Chelsea Halfpenny and Derek Thompson. Plus Shobna Gulati as Chief Supt Khalon and Cathy Tyson as Kath Oliver who are in both episodes?**

“We have a large guest cast in every film and we are so lucky to always have, fantastic performances from everyone. We have a good mix of North East actors and non-North Eastern actors. And often we find the North East actors who are now living in London. Which also gives the show its authenticity.

“The opportunity to work with Brenda is a big attraction. Brenda is phenomenal. There is a magic to working with her. That attracts a lot of our guest cast. And we were very lucky to get Cathy Tyson and Shobna Gulati for this series.”

**Q: After 14 years of watching *Vera* on screen some might forget just how skilled Brenda Blethyn is as an actress?**

“Brenda is an incredible actress. I’m in awe when I get into the edit and I see what she does with a look, what she does with a pause. She is just a phenomenal actress. And having worked with her for a while you can see that she’s having fun on set.”

**Q: *Vera* has given a first screen role to many young actors plus cast older actors who are new faces to the ITV audience?**

“Absolutely. One of the things we are very proud of is that *Vera* has been a fantastic breeding ground for future generations. All of the directors we have worked with have been terrific with emerging talent - and talent who haven’t necessarily had the exposure to high end TV until later in their careers.

## INTERVIEW WITH WILL NICHOLSON CONTINUED

“When you’re sitting across the table in the police interview room with Brenda Blethyn, it’s not like it’s the Brenda show. It’s the *Vera* show. She makes sure she gets the best out of you. She is an incredibly giving actress.”

**Q: What do past *Vera* directors Claire Winyard and Paul Gay bring to their respective final films in series 14?**

“The beauty of *Vera* is that each episode is a stand alone episode. So each episode has a separate director and creative team. Both Claire and Paul came to their episodes with a very clear creative vision. They get the best out of the artists and are wonderful collaborators. They value each and every person’s contribution to the show and that feeds into their creative vision. I love working with them.”

**Q: Northumberland and the wider North East again plays its own crucial role in series 14. How do you find and choose the locations for each story?**

“It comes from the inception in the script development. Each episode has a different DNA and we set that at the script stage. So one film, let’s say, is set in Teeside. That doesn’t mean you have to film all of your locations there. But the DNA of Teeside has to come across in the episode. The final *Vera* film is set in Northumberland. So it is a case of that DNA is put into the script.

“The locations you then choose invariably are based loosely on locations that we know of, to give that sense of DNA. Location manager Andrew Edwards then comes on board and we have a discussion around ‘This is the DNA of this episode and this is the DNA of that episode.’ And so Andrew then has the opportunity to go off and explore. It’s really a guide as to what we’re looking for in terms of this episode.

## INTERVIEW WITH WILL NICHOLSON CONTINUED

“Most people are absolutely delighted to have their home, pub, cafe featured in *Vera*. Being local himself Andrew is brilliant. He will knock on a door and get us into places you wouldn’t normally be able to get into, which is fantastic.”

**Q: The North East has been important to *Vera* and, in turn, *Vera* has been important to the North East?**

“*Vera* has been so incredibly important for the North East. When it first was placed here, TV drama in the region was on its knees. No-one really had a job. You were advised to move into other areas of TV if you wanted to stay in the industry. ITV, Ann Cleeves and Brenda Blethyn have given the North East a backbone on which to build with this iconic series. *Vera* requires cinema and a cinematic approach. The North East has that in abundance.

“I feel a huge duty that each series should reflect every area of the North East. So it’s quite nice to put an episode in Northumberland, an episode in County Durham and an episode in Teeside and Wearside. So that everyone feels like they own the show. So that everyone goes, ‘I feel like a part of it.’ And that’s what we want. Because the North East is a huge community and we want people to feel ownership over it.

“The *Vera* fans who have come to watch filming over the years have also been wonderful. I knew the show was huge but I realised just how big it was when we were filming in Wallsend one night at midnight. Someone drove past and there were people chanting, ‘Vera, Vera, Vera’ as in the football chant. And I realised that when we’re put on a mantle of Alan Shearer, that’s pretty huge. That has been amazing.

## INTERVIEW WITH WILL NICHOLSON CONTINUED

“All of the cast are superb with members of the public. Mainly because they love the human interaction. Both Brenda Blethyn and David Leon (DI Joe Ashworth) are great. Along with everyone else, such as Riley Jones (DC Mark Edwards), Jon Morrison (DC Kenny Lockhart), Rhiannon Clements (DC Steph Duncan), Sarah Kameela Impey (Dr Paula Bennett). It’s a huge thing.

“As are the crew. A lot of people are very interested to know what everyone does. And I feel a responsibility when we rock up somewhere that someone who is 12 can stand there and go, ‘Well, I didn’t know what I was going to do. But I know there is a job for me in drama.’ Whether you’re a cook, a driver, electrician, director, producer, director of photography...whatever you want to be in life there is job for you in drama. I think it’s really important people recognise that. ITV, Brenda and Ann’s legacy is huge in this region.”

**Q: The relationship between David Leon’s DI Joe Ashworth and Vera is, again, highlighted in these two films. What has David brought to the series since his return?**

“Kenny Doughty’s contribution to the show as Aiden Healy was monumental and it was a pleasure and a joy to work with him. His departure led to David’s return. One of the benefits of, then, Detective Sergeant Joe Ashworth going away was that he got further training and had been promoted to Detective Inspector. Which meant he could come back on a slightly different footing.

“Joe has always been the one who has been able to push Vera further than anyone else. There is something about their relationship which is very deep. Coming back into this series you see that more overtly as these films progress. And David does a wonderful job with this serial arc. It’s great to work with him.”



## INTERVIEW WITH WILL NICHOLSON CONTINUED

**Q: We learn yet more about Vera's childhood in the final film 'The Dark Wives'. The relationship with her late father Hector has been a core background throughout?**

"Vera's relationship with her father Hector was quite complex and has shaped her. She had to grow up fast when her mother died. But through those tough times - both for Vera and her father - she loved her father. But his life was not the life that she wanted to lead. We do learn more about her childhood. I think it's a full circle for Vera."

**Q: There are also important topical issues reflected in series 14?**

"There have been lots of episodes over the years where that has been tangible. For example, the episode 'Cuckoo' in series nine which was about drugs and County Lines. We shot that the year before County Lines really exploded in the North East as being a problem. So we do try and make it relatable."

"We want the viewer to go away thinking about the social implications of what the story reveals and also perhaps feel conflicted. Because a lot of our crimes are crimes of passion or moments in time. We want the viewer to think 'if I was in that situation what would I have done?'"

**Q: It is fitting that an adaptation of Ann Cleeves' 11th and latest Vera novel 'The Dark Wives', published in August 2024, is the story chosen for Vera's farewell film?**

"Once we knew this was the final series, it was only right that we spoke to Ann Cleeves about how we bring the series to a conclusion. Her books are her books and they will still have a life after the TV series ends. We felt The Dark Wives was the right thing to adapt for the final film. It brings much of Vera's back story in, her relationship with her father Hector. With also a pertinent 'story of the week'. And the conclusion of a 14-year story arc."

## INTERVIEW WITH WILL NICHOLSON CONTINUED

“But there always has to be differences between the book and the TV adaptation. The show has had its own trajectory over the years. But the essence of the story, the world and Vera’s journey are very similar.”

**Q: The Dark Wives are three ancient standing stones on a remote rocky outcrop. How did you film those scenes?**

“*Vera* is a massive team effort. When we were developing this idea we went to the production designer and said, ‘Look, we want to put three - four metre - standing stones on crags in the middle of Northumberland and they have to be there for two weeks. Viewers can’t see how they are made but you have to liaise with the National Trust to be able to put them there.’

“You expect most people to say they will do it with CGI. But we’ve been very lucky with our production designer Jonathan Tolson - he’s a local chap as well. So we set him the task.

“He got his fantastic art department team together along with the rigging department and after a few recces they came up with a solution as to how to do it. So hats off to them because they did it and they stayed up there in some quite strong winds. The location we used was on Rothley Crags, by Rothley Castle.”

**Q: Ann calls *The Dark Wives* her “angry book”?**

“The book includes scenes involving a private children’s home. When we looked at the book we realised it was an important story. So we have tried to reflect those elements as much as we can.”

**Q: A dog features at one stage in this final series? Although not Brenda’s own dog Jack?**

“The female dog was a true professional. Brenda is our dog whisperer, you see. So she was very well behaved. Brenda is brilliant with all animals, particularly dogs. I think the dog handler was worried Brenda was going to take the dog home with her on the train.”

## INTERVIEW WITH WILL NICHOLSON CONTINUED

**Q: There are nods in the final film to some of the past core *Vera* team over the years, including Paul Ritter (Dr Billy Cartwright), Paul Kaye (Dr Malcolm Donahue), Cush Jumbo (Bethany Whelan), Ibinabo Jack (Jacqueline Williams), Wumni Mosaku (Holly Lawson) and Kenny Doughty as Aiden Healy?**

“This is such a major moment in time for the series and we wanted *Vera* to recognise some of those people. But everyone has made such a huge contribution to the show over the years and - while we couldn’t reflect them all on screen - that is very much recognised by all involved in making *Vera*. It’s been a very happy experience working with the *Vera* team. It’s because we all invested in each other.”

**Q: It must have been emotional for both cast and crew filming certain scenes in the final film?**

“One of the scenes is between Brenda and Jon Morrison (DC Kenny Lockhart) who has been with her throughout, aside from the initial pilot episode.

“That scene, filmed in the middle of the shoot, was very poignant and it was performed brilliantly.

“We scheduled the end segment of that story to be filmed on the last day of filming. We knew it was going to be a big day. These were very poignant and iconic scenes. So it felt apt to do it on the last day. We wanted to be in the incident room as it is such a special place and so much has happened there. So much drama, comedy and fun.

“So for us to be in that room on the last day was very emotional. It was heartbreaking. There were a huge amount of tears. It’s the culmination of 14 years in that space. Everyone has to be professional and you’ve got to get the job done. But some of these people, very sadly, we won’t be working with again. It’s a big thing. For the whole sequence we had half a day to film and we went to the wire on that last day. We just took our time to make sure we got it right.



## INTERVIEW WITH WILL NICHOLSON CONTINUED

“After filming had finished that day on set, because it was such a big moment we had some presentations on set. Effectively a personal farewell to everyone, a huge thanks to Brenda and Ann. We also got a message from ITV so it was a lovely personal moment for the 100-odd crew that we had. There were speeches, including from me. Which was very tricky. There were a lot of pauses. Brenda also made a lovely speech.”

**Q: And filming the very final scene viewers will see on screen?**

“It’s such an important scene for the series. All the stars aligned. It was probably a week or so before the end of filming but it was still a very moving moment. The beauty of Vera is that she will live on in Ann Cleeves’ books where she has been on a slightly different journey. And you’ll always be able to see her on ITVX.”

**Q: Are you able to sum up what Brenda brought to the role over 14 years and the sheer scale of her achievement in leading 56 feature length films?**

“The legacy that Brenda has left is just phenomenal. She’s done a lot for the North East socially. She is an honorary Geordie. Including being patron of the Tyne and Wear Riding For The Disabled Association based at the Washington Riding Centre. Also supporting places like the Charlotte Straker Residential, Nursing and Respite Care Home in Corbridge and unveiling The Herring Girl statue in North Shields, which honours the role women played in the fishing industry.

“When you see a film and TV star like Brenda you think they are a film and TV star. Obviously Brenda is that. But she is a huge people person and that comes across in everything she does. I was with her when she opened the 2024 Summer Fete at Charlotte Straker House in Corbridge and she spent the best part of two hours meeting and talking with the residents, staff and fans who had come along.

## INTERVIEW WITH WILL NICHOLSON CONTINUED

“At that sort of event she loves interacting with people. She loves changing people’s lives. It’s not about adoration for Brenda. It’s about human interaction and understanding of people. So that day in Corbridge was phenomenal. Almost every second people were asking for photos with her, autographs and a chat. And she stopped for everyone. Smiling and stopping for every request over the course of those two hours. She was amazing.”

**Q: *Vera* has a huge international audience. Why do you think the series has been so successful across the world?**

“Vera is a strong independent woman who is very kind and loyal. She is also very empathetic to the victims. The core of all of the stories are relatable and the crimes leave you conflicted. The North East is also a beautiful canvas to put the show on. People look at it and think, ‘That is a stunning place.’ We try and make it look as cinematic as possible.”

**Q: Are there many ‘Easter eggs’ for loyal *Vera* fans to look out for in these two films?**

“There are lots of ‘Easter eggs’ for fans in these final two films. And I think the Easter bunny become more generous as this final series progresses.”

**Q: The end of series wrap party was held at St James’ Park, the home of Newcastle United?**

“*Vera* is a North East show but St James’ Park was the nearest ground to our base in Killingworth. So we thought it was an appropriate venue. We had a lovely evening with a huge *Vera* cake. That was an emotional evening and it was wonderful that Ann Cleeves could be there to share it with us.”

## INTERVIEW WITH WILL NICHOLSON CONTINUED

**Q: Did you take any mementoes from the studio set in Killingworth?**

“I have the very last call sheet signed by the cast.”

**Q: Presumably the *Vera* set has already been broken up?**

“Sadly that is the nature of TV. We are planning to get a Vera costume into the Tyne and Wear Museums. With hopefully a permanent display. And probably wider afield we are finding a home for Vera’s Land Rover which can be preserved and displayed in some sort of motor museum.”

**Q: What’s next for you?**

“There are lots of opportunities out there. So we will see. I feel very honoured, blessed and lucky to have worked on a show like *Vera*.”







## SERIES SYNOPSIS

DCI Vera Stanhope (Brenda Blethyn) makes an emotional return for the fourteenth and final series of ITV's *Vera*.

Told across two epic films, the stories combine murderous intrigue with heart and soul in Vera's personal journey. In this final series, the personal and professional collide like never before when the sudden prospect of promotion confronts Vera with a life-affecting change. What will this mean for Vera? And what does it mean for her team?

DI Joe Ashworth (David Leon) continues to grow in his new role, exploring his own investigative style. But despite his dogged dedication, it doesn't take Vera long to recognise something's not right with Joe. Struck by grief following the death of his dad, can Vera get through to him before his work seriously suffers? With all of this to contend with, Vera must also decide if her trusted team of diligent detectives, Kenny (Jon Morrison), Mark (Riley Jones), Steph (Rhiannon Clements) and pathologist Dr Paula Bennett (Sarah Kameela Impey) are ready to stand on their own feet.

We first catch up with Vera when she is called to the banks of the Tyne after the body of a young delivery driver is discovered by morning anglers. As Vera begins her investigation, she discovers the victim had recently been released from prison after serving time for GBH. Could this have something to do with his untimely demise? Has our former inmate been served cold justice? Or does his death run deeper? A broken relationship, secret love, grudges, regret, fraud...a complicated picture begins to emerge.

As if this wasn't enough to unpick, Vera is tasked with investigating a high-profile cold case. A former steel union man has had his twenty-year conviction for killing his wife overturned, meaning her killer is still at large. With two high profile cases to investigate, Vera has a huge amount to deal with and needs her team to be on their top game to close these cases. But at what cost?

## SERIES SYNOPSIS

In the soulful final episode, the violent death of a bright young student is next for Vera to unravel after a body is found beneath a mysterious local monument known as “The Dark Wives” in a village from Vera’s childhood. Gang related? Ritualistic? One thing is for certain the body was moved there. But by who? Vera soon learns that our student was a volunteer at a local children’s home, and one of their residents, a young girl, Chole, has gone missing overnight. Surely the two cases are related? Well, that’s what Vera wants to find out.

The investigation spreads far and wide across the sprawling Northumberland landscape, and Vera tests the team like never before as they search for the truth. As the investigation ramps up, Vera and the team find themselves playing cat and mouse with their killer at an annual ‘Witch Hunt’ festival in a small village from Vera’s past. An exciting and intense conclusion thrusts Vera once more into the path of danger and once again shows us why she’s the best. Ultimately, Vera has a decision to make about her future, and the deep connection with missing Chloe prompts poignant reflections on her childhood spent with her father Hector, forcing her to consolidate the sheer scale of her achievements so far.













EPISODE ONE - INSIDE

## EPISODE ONE SYNOPSIS

### **'Inside' by Phil Mulryne**

DCI Vera Stanhope (Brenda Blethyn) is called to the banks of the Tyne where the body of a young man has been washed up. A blow to the head indicates that this wasn't an accidental drowning and what's more intriguing is that this person, Zac Martin, had recently been released from prison after serving time for GBH. Having already presented Vera with an important career opportunity, Chief Superintendent Khalon adds to her load by tasking her with investigating a cold case too. A former union man has had his twenty-year conviction for killing his wife overturned which means her killer is still out there. So with two high-profile cases to investigate, Vera looks to her diligent, dynamic and dedicated team to get to the guarded truth. But can Vera get to the bottom of why one of her team is struggling to give as much as they should?





EPISODE TWO - THE DARK WIVES









## EPISODE TWO SYNOPSIS

### **'The Dark Wives' by Phil Mulryne**

DCI Vera Stanhope (Brenda Blethyn) is called to the foot of 'The Dark Wives', three mythical monoliths Vera remembers from her childhood. A bright young student has been violently killed and as if this wasn't enough, there's a missing teen to contend with. As the investigation unfolds, Vera pushes her team to piece together what has happened to both youngsters... but why is she cracking the whip more than usual? As Vera challenges the team, a web of intrigue begins to unravel as we learn about fractured relationships, secret projects, corruption, lies and betrayal. Another body. Another avenue of investigation leads Vera to an exciting and dangerous conclusion. Vera is thrust once more into the path of danger and once again shows us why she's the best. However, there's no getting away from the fact that a life-affecting change is coming Vera's way.





## VERA FAREWELL PET

ITV and Multistory Media presents a special celebratory documentary marking the end of the beloved TV detective drama, *Vera*. With exclusive behind-the-scenes access to the final series, viewers will discover the enduring appeal of the show and its profound impact on the cast, crew, and fans alike.

Featuring heartfelt interviews with cast members including David Leon, Jon Morrison and Riley Jones, plus author Ann Cleeves, who share their cherished memories of working alongside Brenda Blethyn and reflect on the unique bonds formed throughout the years.

As DCI Vera Stanhope prepares to hang up her iconic hat with the last two thrilling episodes, this documentary will capture the extraordinary journey of *Vera* and its lasting influence on British crime drama. Set against the stunning backdrop of Northumberland, where the landscape became a character in its own right, this celebration honours the show's remarkable legacy.

This hour long documentary offers fans a final chance to say 'Farewell Pet' to one of television's most beloved detectives, DCI Vera Stanhope.

*Vera farewell pet* is produced and directed by Iwan Roberts. The Executive Producer is Mike Blair, Multistory Media.



## AUTHOR ANN CLEEVES



Ann Cleeves is the author of 37 critically acclaimed novels, an international bestseller translated into over 20 languages worldwide. In 2017 was awarded the highest accolade in crime writing, the CWA Diamond Dagger. She is the creator of popular detectives Vera Stanhope, Jimmy Perez and Matthew Venn, who can be found on television in ITV's *Vera*, BBC One's *Shetland* and ITV's *The Long Call* respectively. The TV series and the books they are based on have become international sensations, capturing the minds of millions worldwide.

Ann worked as a probation officer, bird observatory cook and auxiliary coastguard before she started writing. She is a member of 'Murder Squad', working with other British northern writers to promote crime fiction. Ann also spends her time advocating for reading to improve health and wellbeing and supporting access to books. In 2021 her Reading for Wellbeing project launched with local authorities across the North East, and in 2022 she was awarded an OBE for her services to reading and libraries. *The Dark Wives*, is her 11th Vera novel. She lives in Northumberland where the *Vera* books are set. You can find Ann on Twitter and Facebook @AnnCleeves.

*The Dark Wives*, Ann's latest novel in her acclaimed Vera Stanhope series, was published in August 2024. For press enquires: [emma@emmaharrow.com](mailto:emma@emmaharrow.com)



*"Working on Vera has been a joy from beginning to end and I'm sad to be saying Cheerio. But I am so proud of our achievements over the last fourteen years. I'll be forever grateful to the wonderful Ann Cleeves who created Vera, and to Elaine Collins who saw fit to cast me in the role. The Producers, dream cast and crew have been fabulous and I'm going to miss them, but I won't forget their huge talent, the camaraderie, laughter or kindness we shared nor the friendship of the people of the north east and our fans worldwide. Thank you from the bottom of my heart."*

Brenda Blethyn

## CAST CREDITS – EPISODE ONE

DCI Vera Stanhope.....BRENDA  
BLETHYN  
DI Joe  
Ashworth.....DAVID  
LEON  
DC Kenny Lockhart.....JON  
MORRISON  
DC Steph Duncan.....RHIANNON  
CLEMENTS  
DC Mark  
Edwards.....RILEY  
JONES  
Pathologist Dr. Paula Bennett.....SARAH KAMEELA IMPEY  
Zachary Martin.....BRYAN

## CAST CREDITS – EPISODE ONE

Dylan

Rowlins.....JOSHUA

SHER

Erika

Rowlins.....MICHELLE

HOLMES

Richard Rowlins.....SIMON

LENAGAN

Gary Creelan.....KEVIN

WHATELY

Kath

Oliver.....CATHY

TYSON

Gwen Cobden.....JACOBA



CAST CREDITS – EPISODE TWO

DCI Vera Stanhope.....BRENDA

BLETHYN

DI Joe

Ashworth.....DAVID

LEON

DC Kenny Lockhart.....JON

MORRISON

DC Steph Duncan.....RHIANNON

CLEMENTS

DC Mark

Edwards.....RILEY

JONES

Pathologist Dr. Paula Bennett.....SARAH KAMEELA

IMPEY

Chief Superintendent Khalon.....SHORNA

CAST CREDITS – EPISODE TWO

Dave Limbal.....	CHRISTOPHER
CONNEL	
Jimmy Hebble.....	DAREN
MORFIT	
Chris Worsten.....	ANTHONY
FLANAGAN	
Anna Worsten.....	KATE
MARAVAN	
Rachel Anson.....	TIEGAN
ANSON	
Miggy.....	GASSAN
ABDULRAZEK	
Esther	
Owens.....	SENNIA

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PRODUCTION CREDITS

Executive Producers.....KATE  
BARTLETT  
.....WILL  
NICHOLSON  
Writer.....PHIL  
MULRYNE  
Director episode  
1.....PAUL GAY  
Director episode 2.....CLAIRE  
WINYARD  
Producer.....WILL  
NICHOLSON  
Co-Producer.....FAHIMA  
CHOWDHURY



# PRODUCTION CREDITS

Development Executive.....KERRY

GREENHILL

Production Designer.....JONATHAN

TOLSON

Art Director.....STEVEN

GRANGER

Costume

Designer.....CLAIRE

WILSON

Make-up Designer.....NICHOLA

BELLAMY

Production Manager.....FRANCESCA

SARDONE

1st Assistant Director ep 1.....GRANTLY



