James Bolam and Michael French star as father-and-son doctors in *Born And Bred*, a major new family drama series for BBC ONE.

GP Arthur Gilder (James Bolam) has lived in the Lancashire village of Ormston all his life and he is ready to hand over the reins of his practice to his son, Tom (Michael French). Tom moves back to the village from Manchester, bringing with him his wife, Deborah (Jenna Russell), and children, 17-year-old Helen (Charlotte Salt), Michael (Ross Little), who’s 11, Catherine (Polly Thompson), seven, and baby Philip. But this is the Fifties and Tom also brings with him a sense of dynamism and change for a new age which Arthur does not exactly embrace with open arms.

As the village’s doctor, Arthur knows all the residents of this tight-knit community and is highly respected by them. There’s the Reverend Brewer (Clive Swift, *Keeping Up Appearances*), who is not your average man of the cloth; bold and brassy pub landlady Phyllis (Maggie Steed, *Pie In The Sky*); village mechanic Eddie (Samuel Hudson, *Brookside*); the slightly dippy Jean (Naomi Radcliffe, *Coronation Street*), who is infatuated with Eddie; and Wilf, the station-master with a nose for trouble (John Henshaw, *The Cops*).

Tom takes on more than he bargained for by moving back to Ormston. First, he must contend with battles at the surgery and cottage hospital, as Arthur tries to cling on to the old-fashioned, tried-and-tested ways of doing things. Tom, on the other hand, is determined that the hospital should adapt or die. Then he has to deal with an old flame, Linda (Tracey Childs, *Howards’ Way*), who seems very pleased to see him back in the village, despite the fact that she is about to marry his best friend, Len (Peter Gunn). And, if that were not enough, there’s also the growing attraction between Tom’s teenage daughter, Helen, and mechanic Eddie …

“*Born And Bred* is a true family drama, a treat for everyone,” says Jane Tranter, Controller of Drama Commissioning. “Its story-telling is warm, familiar and based on a strong sense of community. The characters are as rich a mix as one is likely to meet and it is set in one of the most glorious landscapes in Britain.”

The series also boasts an impressive list of guest stars, including Roger Lloyd Pack (*Only Fools And Horses, Vicar Of Dibley*), Denise Welch (*Coronation Street*), Richard Ridings (*Fat Friends, Common As Muck*), Chris Walker (*Playing The Field, Merseybeat*) and Sara Crowe (*Four Weddings And A Funeral*).

*Born And Bred* was filmed in and around Lancashire. It is co-created by Chris Chibnall and Nigel McGrery, written by Chris Chibnall and produced by Phil Collinson. The executive producers for the BBC are Simon Lewis and Susan Hogg.
Born And Bred

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Following in his father’s footsteps is the last thing on city GP Tom Gilder’s mind – until he returns to the picturesque Lancashire village where he grew up. On the cusp of change, yet caught in the golden glow of post-war tranquillity, it proves irresistible.

In *Born And Bred*, Michael French plays Tom, a forward-thinking, wholehearted supporter of the fledgling NHS, a father of four and a man on a mission. Back home is his widowed father, Arthur, played by James Bolam. As the village GP, he is on a different mission – to lure his son back to where he was born.

Set in the innocent and aspirational Fifties, the series is written by Chris Chibnall, who grew up in Lancashire. “It is about community, stubbornness, loyalty and love. It is set just pre rock ‘n’ roll, pre the invention of the teenager, pre the Americanisation and globalisation of the world. We can tell stories in a different way because the sensibilities are different,” Chibnall explains.

“There is a different set of values, a frozen-in-time kind of innocence. But it also says a lot about the kind of society we live in. We can look and see what’s changed and what’s similar. The world may have changed superficially, but actually the values and aspirations in many ways remain the same.”

Producer Phil Collinson agrees: “[The series] is driven by the lives of the characters and their sense of humour. The NHS is used as a canvas, to set up Tom as a moderniser and his father as a dinosaur, but that’s a universal story when innovations are suggested,” he points out.

“Although it is set in the Fifties, people don’t wear hats, except for weddings and funerals, and we see as few cars as possible because we didn’t want the period to overshadow the people.”

Filming in a small village near Clitheroe in rural Lancashire helped. “There are no telegraph poles, TV aerials and satellite dishes allowed and ‘phone cables are buried underground,” says Collinson. “For us it was a dream – we didn’t have to do anything except turn up.”

Chibnall adds: “The first time I went to the location I had goosepimples, it is just absolutely beyond what I could have imagined, it is so perfect, so beautiful. It’s a well-kept secret and we want to keep it that way for the sake of the village and the people who live and work there.”
Cast

Principal cast

Dr Arthur Gilder  James Bolam
Dr Tom Gilder     Michael French
Deborah Gilder    Jenna Russell
Rev Brewer        Clive Swift
Phyllis Woolf     Maggie Steed
Linda Cosgrove    Tracey Childs
Len Cosgrove      Peter Gunn
Jean Bradshaw     Naomi Radcliffe
Wilf Bradshaw     John Henshaw
Eddie Mills       Samuel Hudson
Ernest Gillies    Milton Johns
Helen Gilder      Charlotte Salt
Michael Gilder    Ross Little
Catherine Gilder  Polly Thompson

Guest cast

Episode One

Norman Pendleton  Roger Lloyd Pack
Edna Pendleton    Annette Badland

Episode Two

Edie McClure      Denise Welch
Don McClure       Paul Bown

Episode Three

Horace Trubshaw   Richard Ridings
Jack Stubbs       Steve Huison
Cornelius Sibbald Jamie Glover

Episode Five

Frank Marston     Chris Walker

Episode Six

Sally             Sara Crowe
Neville Manley    Christian Steel
**Production team**

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<td></td>
<td>Stephen Bennett (Ep 5)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Directors</td>
<td>David Innes Edwards (Eps 1-2)</td>
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<td>Executive producers</td>
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<td>Director of photography</td>
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<td>Phil Collinson</td>
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<td>Taff Batley</td>
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<td>Barbara Southcott</td>
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<td>Ray Holman</td>
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<td>John Parker (Eps 1-2, 4, 6)</td>
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<td>William Webb (Eps 3, 5)</td>
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**Regional interest**

**Sunderland**

*Pages 7-8*
James Bolam (Arthur) was born and grew up in Sunderland.

**Essex**

*Pages 9-10*
Michael French (Tom) was born in Epping.

**Liverpool**

*Pages 12-13*
Clive Swift (Reverend Brewer) was born in Liverpool and also lived in Southport.

*Page 17*
Samuel Hudson (Eddie) grew up in Birkenhead and now lives on The Wirral.

**Devon**

*Page 14*
Maggie Steed (Phyllis) was born in Plymouth in Devon.

**Staffordshire**

*Page 20*
Charlotte Salt (Helen) is from Staffordshire and goes to school in Stone.

**County Durham**

*Page 24*
Denise Welch (Edie) was born in Ebchester, County Durham.

**Manchester**

*Pages 15-16*
Naomi Radcliffe (Jean) was born in Oldham and also lived in Middleton.

*Page 19*
John Henshaw (Wilf) was born and bred in Manchester.
Stripped to his three-button vest, scarlet neckerchief, braces and baggy trousers, Dr Gilder Senior proves himself to be a fine figure of a man – no matter how young and fit the opposition. And when it comes to the Ormston village men’s race, he has one or two tricks up his sleeve …

“Part of the beauty of the series is that Arthur can be jolly and jokey and have fun and drinks with the villagers,” says James Bolam of the tongue-in-cheek tussle. “That race shows just what a great deal of humour there is among the villagers – as there is with any sort of mixed community.

“But Arthur can also be quite firm. He is very good at what he does but he is steeped in the village traditions and the old-fashioned ways and is wary of change.

“Now that he has been widowed, Arthur wants his family back in the village,” James continues. “He wants his son to come into the practice with him and he probably has retirement in mind, but at the same time he doesn’t want to stop working.

“Deep down inside, Arthur knows that there is going to be change but, like most older people, he finds it difficult. If you’ve done something the same way all your life, then to be told to do it another way takes an enormous strength to change.”

Arthur’s plot to lure Tom (Michael French) back is a success. But the pair still have a prickly relationship as they tussle over which medic’s ways will hold sway. “One also has to remember, in the Fifties, doctors and teachers held a much more esteemed position than they
do now,” James explains. “Arthur has invited Tom back but begins to realise that he has bitten off more than he can chew. I think he finds change – like we all do – difficult.

“The Fifties was a decade of great change. There was rationing at the beginning but, by the end of the Fifties, it was rock ‘n’ roll and the teenager had been invented!

“It marked the time of *Look Back In Anger* being at the Royal Court, so everything, values of all sorts, had changed by the end of the Fifties in a most dramatic way – more than any other decade of the century.”

For James, one of the strengths of the series is the relationship between Arthur and the village community. “I should think that, with the locals, if he didn’t bring them into the world, he has certainly treated them all at some time or another.

“He knows them all well and they know him and, although that certainly makes for a complex relationship, I don’t think that he regards it as difficult – just as the way things are and the way things, inevitably, must be.”

The actor relished the opportunity to play with the ensemble cast: “There is immense depth, not only to Arthur, but to all the other characters, and there are some wonderful characters in the series,” he smiles. “Also, it’s always a help to have good sets, locations and surroundings – which we certainly had and we did have some good weather too.”

James had worked with *Born And Bred* writer Chris Chibnall before, on the ITV monologue *Stormin’ Norman*, in which he played a tube driver, reflecting on the past 40 years on his last day before retirement.

“The most important thing is the script and I know what a smashing writer Chris is,” he enthuses. “So, we seem to have all the right ingredients there.”
Those healing hands are back in demand again – but warm, caring family man Dr Tom Gilder could hardly be more different from Michael French’s previous outing as a medic, when he played surgeon Nick Jordan in the hit BBC drama, *Holby City*.

“I do like playing doctors, it brings out the more compassionate side of my own nature,” Michael grins. “I like to listen and I like to understand and help people. It’s also great to be able to play a happily married man and a father in an era when there were such strong family values.”

Working in a picturesque village in Lancashire has been an eye-opener for the London-born ex-*EastEnders*. “I’d never really experienced the north-south divide over a long period before,” he admits. “The people in Lancashire are so friendly, there are great pubs and the countryside is beautiful.”

Michael has certainly done his research for *Born And Bred*, boning up on those early years of the NHS which so inspire Tom Gilder. “I read about the setting up of cottage hospitals, which is what Tom and his father are trying to do,” he explains. “Tom is painted as a fully paid-up socialist, who believes in equality for all and that it is every man’s duty to make the world a better place. But he is a doer, not a dreamer – he feels that he can make a difference in the village and it is through the NHS that he can really help.”

Michael is also something of a doer. Since shaking off the role of David Wicks, he has proved himself as one of the country’s most in-demand TV actors, with recent roles in BBC dramas *Gentleman Thief* and *The Fabulous Bagel Boys*. 

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**Did you know?**

- Michael starred as Marc in the West End stage production of *Art*, alongside Stephen Tompkinson and James Fleet.

- Michael’s dad is a greengrocer and Michael used to work in his shop before he took up acting.

**Born**: East London  
**Trained**: Mount View Theatre School  
**Appeared in**: *EastEnders, Crime Traveller, Holby City, Gentleman Thief, The Fabulous Bagel Boys.*
Bagel Boys. But he has also been carefully honing his craft away from the cameras, notching up a reputation as a serious theatre actor.

Not only has the 38-year-old actor starred in Art in the West End, he has appeared at the Royal Court in the play Sacred Heart and was chosen by Sir Richard Eyre to play Figaro in a Royal National Theatre workshop production of The Marriage Of Figaro.

“It was a wonderful experience,” he says. “That is what I love about this business, I have been given some great opportunities and worked with people whom I can really learn from on Born And Bred.”

The all-important relationship between father and son is one that Michael can relate to. “There are parallels in my own life with what is happening between Tom and Arthur,” he says. “I’ve gone into partnership with my own dad in a business and it is working out very well.

“That kind of partnership can change a relationship and I think Tom had always felt that maybe his father wasn’t always there for him when he was growing up; that he spent more time looking after his patients.”

Away from work, Michael’s own time is spent as far away from the glittery showbiz scene as possible. “I’m not a great one for parties,” he says with a grin. “It just doesn’t suit me – I like to keep work and home totally separate.

“I’ve bought a house near the Essex village I was brought up in,” he reveals. “It suits me very well because I’ve got family nearby and people I used to go to school with – it really feels like coming home when I’m back there. That’s why I can identify with Tom so much – coming back to his roots.”
Feisty and fearless, Deborah Gilder blows a veritable gale force of fresh air through the sedate Lancashire village of Ormston. From the moment she strides into the picturesque church, the local matrons’ lives will never be quite the same again.

“She is nobody’s ‘little wifey’, even if it is the Fifties!” laughs Jenna Russell. “She is a city girl who married young and, though she may have four kids to look after, she’s not going to settle for nest-building and a little light dusting.”

At just 33, Jenna admits to being a bit shocked to find herself the mother of a teenager. “My own mum had me at 17 and, when I was in my teens, everyone took us for sisters – so I just had to keep remembering that!”

London-born Jenna went to Sylvia Young’s Stage School and is as well known for her singing as her acting. Hers is the voice on the theme tune to Red Dwarf and she has starred in the West End musicals Les Misérables and Martin Guerre and the RSC’s production of The Beggar’s Opera.

She is best known on television as Bernadette in Picking Up The Pieces and for three series of On The Up. But she had the chance to become a household name at the tender age of 17 – and turned it down.

“I was offered a major part in EastEnders at the very beginning and I confess I was really tempted,” she admits. “But I was just starting out on my career and finally decided that I didn’t really want to be tied down. I can honestly say I haven’t regretted it – I have done so many wonderfully different jobs since then.”

Jenna’s partner is actor Ray Coulthard, whom she met five years ago when they appeared together in the play Landslide. “We always make a concerted effort not to be away from each other for too long. But, in this business that’s not always possible.

“Shooting Born And Bred is the longest we’ve been apart and I’ve missed him terribly. He’s been busy doing the decking in my mum’s garden!”

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**Did you know..?**

- Jenna Russell sang the theme music to the hit BBC TWO comedy series, Red Dwarf.

**Born:** London  
**Trained:** Sylvia Young’s Stage School  
** Appeared in:** Men Only, Picking Up The Pieces, On The Up.
Keeping up appearances is not something that
the Reverend Brewer, Ormston’s spiritual leader,
is too worried about, despite being played by
Clive Swift, best known as the long-suffering
Richard Bucket (pronounced Bouquet) …

The card-playing cleric thinks nothing of
relieving his male parishioners of their hard-
earned cash at poker and even lives up to his
name when there is a call for large amounts of
beer to be made on the cheap.

“He’s a super character,” beams Liverpool-born
Clive. “He is a real maverick and not at all
pious. I see him as benign and benevolent,
although full of weaknesses. I’m delighted to get
such a jolly part.”

Donning a dog collar is nothing new for 66-
year-old Clive, who played Bishop Proudie in
The Barchester Chronicles and a vicar in The
Sailor’s Return. “It is good to do a character
who has so many different facets to him and set
in a period that saw so much change,” he says.

Certainly for Clive, the Fifties was a heady
time. He was called up for National Service and
served as a Second Lieutenant in the RAFC,
and in Egypt and Cyprus, then went on to
Caius College, Cambridge in 1956 to study
English Literature.

“When I came down in 1959, I became an
actor,” he says, simply. “I had acted at my
school, Clifton College in Bristol, and seemed to
be quite good at it, especially comedy. In fact, I
didn’t want to go to Cambridge, I wanted to go
to drama school – but my father insisted.

“But while I was there I found their wonderful
little amateur theatre which was run by the
undergraduates and I was there with Ian
McKellen and Derek Jacobi. Peter Hall was
there a couple of years before and when he was
setting up the Royal Shakespeare Company, he
asked me to join him.”

Since then, in a distinguished career, Clive –
who was formerly married to writer Margaret

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**Did you know..?**

- Clive Swift made his professional debut at the
  Nottingham Playhouse in 1959.

- He has a passion for watching cricket and is a
  member of Middlesex County Cricket Club.

- Clive’s son, Joe, is a presenter on BBC TWO’s
  Gardener’s World.

**Born:** Liverpool  
**Trained:** Cambridge University, has a degree in
   English Literature  
**Appeared in:** Keeping Up Appearances, First
   Among Equals, The Pickwick Papers, The
   Barchester Chronicles.
Drabble – has appeared on stage in countless and varied roles, from Charles Pooter in *Mr & Mrs Nobody*, to King Lear.

The London-based star is now a frequent radio broadcaster, most recently heard in the award-winning comedy *People Like Us*. He has also recorded audio books, including *The History Of Mr Polly, The Canterbury Tales* and *The Moonstone*. 
It could be a case of “Don’t mention the war” around pub landlady Phyllis Woolfe; according to Maggie Steed, who plays this spirited licensee, it wasn’t the Fifties when she “never had it so good”.

“She was one of the many women who had found freedom during the War and saw it as the best time of her life,” says Maggie. “Since then, nothing has been quite the same – especially returning to a place like Ormston.

“There are probably a few who wonder exactly what she got up to while she was away, but they’d never say it to her face. After all, she’s got the power to ban them from the pub and she certainly knows a lot of secrets – although she is the soul of discretion.”

Plymouth-born Maggie found fame in the series *Shine On Harvey Moon*, set just after the War, so the *Born And Bred* era is one she knows well. “I was just a kid in the Fifties,” she says. “But I do remember people saying that the rationing and privation then was worse than during the War.

“I remember it being a dreary time, huddled in one room with Jack Frost on the windows and paraffin heaters throwing shadows on the walls. Even though it was supposed to be a boom time, I think many people still lived under the shadow of the War.”

Maggie, who trained at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School, has worked with the Royal National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company and her TV roles include *Inspector Morse*, *Midsomer Murders* and the hit series *Pie In The Sky*.

“I have my old school drama teacher, Joan Warn, to thank,” she says, gratefully. “I grew up in Plymouth and she really encouraged me to become an actress. I wouldn’t be here without her.”
She may spend most of her days in dirty dungarees but scrapyard owner Jean Bradshaw scrubs up well for special occasions – although there is one problem. “It’s the girdle and stockings,” groans Coronation Street star Naomi Radcliffe. “It’s been great spending months just slopping around in those baggy dungarees, long-johns and stonking great boots, while all the other women in the cast have had to put up with Fifties underwear.

“But when Jean gets dressed up, I have to wear it, too, and I can’t bear it. Goodness knows how they used to manage, it’s so restricting.”

Naomi has also escaped spending too much time in the make-up chair, although that, too, took a bit of getting used to. “All I need is to have my hair flattened down and loads of dirt put on me, the muckier the better,” she grins. “It’s very liberating.”

Naomi’s role as lovesick Jean is the Oldham-born actress’s second TV outing since her dramatic departure from the Street, when her character Alison first lost her baby and was then killed by a truck.

“You can’t get more final than that. I certainly can’t go back as Alison Webster, can I?” she says, wryly. “But I never really saw myself as a soap star anyway and I found it really difficult being recognised everywhere I went.”

After leaving the show, Naomi moved on to the theatre, where she enjoyed herself bringing new writing to small venues. “It was quite scary leaving and then waiting for the work to come in,” she admits. “I just had to sit it out. My first job was in Be My Baby at the Soho Theatre and that was also set in the Fifties, but a bit later than Born And Bred.

“I played a girl who had a baby out of wedlock and had to hand it over for adoption. It was beautifully sad – but also incredibly funny and great to get my teeth into. Then I played a greasy-haired girl with lots of kids in A Good Thief for Granada – yet more glamour!”

Naomi will also be seen in the new series of Nice Guy Eddie on BBC ONE later this year.

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**Did you know..?**

- Prior to playing Alison Webster in Coronation Street, Naomi appeared in the soap as a secretary at Weatherfield Town Hall.

**Born:** Oldham  
**Trained:** Welsh College of Music and Drama  
** Appeared in:** Queer As Folk, Coronation Street, Sunburn, The Grand, Band Of Gold.  
**Upcoming:** BBC ONE drama Nice Guy Eddie, with Ricky Tomlinson, and 24-Hour Party People, alongside John Simm, Steve Coogan and Christopher Eccleston.
The daughter of a vicar – the retired Canon of Manchester Cathedral, in fact – and an English teacher, Naomi reckons that she's got a love of words and performance in her blood. “Also, my mum used to take me to the theatre a lot and I think it rubbed off,” she explains. “I was desperate to go to drama school, but it took a year before I was accepted.

“I finally went to the Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff and loved every minute of it – not least because that’s where I met my boyfriend!”
By now, Samuel Hudson knows as much about the Fifties as any Baby Boomer. The ex-
Brookside star has combed his quiff on stage in both West Side Story and Grease. So, as
lovestruck Eddie Mills, he feels right at home. “I couldn’t really dance a step in either of
them,” he admits. “But I was quite a good
singer and the acting was no problem – even
though, as Bernardo in West Side Story, I
literally died on stage every night!”

Sam, who shot to fame as the troubled Ryan
Musgrove in Brookside, relished the
opportunity to play Eddie. “He is a wonderfully
comic character, with a heart of gold and a lot
of endearing innocence. I love playing comedy –
it’s the reason I got into this business in the first
place. But this is the first job I’ve had that’s
allowed me to do it.

“So Brookie, I think I must have fought just
about everyone in the Close,” laughs the Derby-
born actor. “But it was a great opportunity. The
only problem was that my girlfriend, Natasha
Symms, was in Hollyoaks at the same time and
so, when we went out, we were always
recognised. Going to the pub for a quiet pint
was out of the question.”

Sam and Natasha now share a home on the
Wirral, not far from where he grew up in
Birkenhead. “We’ve got a beautiful Grade II
listed house that dates back to 1843,” he says.
“It’s a running joke on Born And Bred that
every time I get a day off, I’m dashing back
there to either paint or re-build something.”

Not that DIY is any problem for Sam. “Before
going to Birmingham School of Speech and
Drama, I trained as a surveyor and that has
come in useful,” he reveals. “But it was never
going to be the career for me. I didn’t put my
heart and soul into it – even though I passed all
the exams I took.

“I just couldn’t see myself in a job, wearing a
shirt and tie. That’s when I started to get
interested in drama and got involved in an
amateur production. The minute I walked on
stage and got my first laugh, I was hooked. It
may sound corny, but it’s true – it was like
being hit on the head with a mallet. I knew that
was what I had to do.”

Did you know..?

· Samuel was in a rock band for six years.

· He is a massive Star Trek fan!

· In his spare time, Samuel is renovating a Grade II
listed building.

Born: Derby, but now lives in Bootle, Merseyside
Trained: Birmingham School of Speech and Drama
Appeared in: Brookside, Dangerfield.
Statuesque actress Tracey Childs isn’t sure that she would have fitted into the Britain of the Fifties – not in comfort, anyway. “They just didn’t make seamed, natural stockings for legs as long as mine!” she reveals with a grin.

“But then, during the War, I don’t suppose Linda had to worry where her next pair of nylons was coming from. I imagine she had quite a nice time having the odd fling with the chaps from a nearby American air base.

“Now, here she is getting married at 35, which at that time would have been incredibly late. You could say she’s been on the shelf – but certainly not collecting any dust!”

Not that the locals would dare criticise Linda to her face. “There are barbed comments about her wearing white down the aisle,” says 38-year-old Tracey. “But then it’s clear that she absolutely adores her Len and he worships the ground she walks on.

“Mind you, there is still a little frisson when her childhood sweetheart, Tom, returns. He was her first love.”

It is over 10 years since London-born Tracey found fame as Lynne Howard in Howard’s Way, the glamorous TV series that was dubbed “Dallas on the water”. “It was all big boats, beautiful clothes, nice cars and lots of very rich people being miserable,” she recalls.

“We had a ball doing it, but to be in a big series like that in those days meant that you were untouchable on television for years afterwards. So I ran off to the theatre, where I have been happily touring two plays a year.”

But getting back in front of the cameras was no problem, Tracey reveals. “It’s like riding a bike – it all comes flooding back. It was only when I got on set the first day I realised just how much I love it and have missed it. Working on Born And Bred has been a real thrill.”
He may have been a street urchin, with holes in his shoes, but The Cops star John Henshaw insists that, growing up in the Fifties, he never had it so good. But it wasn’t the post-war prosperity he relished – it was community spirit.

“I grew up in Ancoats in Manchester, at the back of the Daily Express building,” explains the 51-year-old. “It was a real working-class community, called Little Italy because there were so many Italian immigrants there.

“I remember that, although people may not have had a lot, they were starting to enjoy themselves a bit; there were barrel organs and ice-cream. As kids we all had holes in our pants and cardboard in our shoes,” he reveals, adding with a grin: “Some had corrugated cardboard – they were the better-off ones!”

His experience accounts for why John could relate so well to the people of Ormston. “The village is untouched by the world and encapsulates all the good things about those days,” he says. “Wilf would have seen two world wars and a recession, so to him the Fifties were happy days.

“There he is, the local stationmaster, with just a few trains a day – so he gets up to all kinds of shenanigans. He is a loveable scoundrel with a finger in lots of pies and a daughter he really loves … but manages to rub up the wrong way!”

It’s quite a change from the tough-guy roles John has often played in the past, in particular hard-man PC Roy Bramwell in the BBC TWO drama The Cops. “Working on three series of that was a dream,” he says. “It was so innovative – a great way of working.

“But now it’s good to do family drama – and not have to beat people up and scowl all the time!”

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Did you know..?  
- John was a refuse collector for 10 years before he decided to become an actor at the age of 40.
- His first big break was as Robert Lindsay’s character’s minder in the acclaimed Channel 4 series, GBH.
- John is one of 12 brothers and sisters.

**Born:** Manchester  
**Appeared in:** GBH, The Cops, Nice Guy Eddie, When Saturday Comes.

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Charlotte Salt is Helen Gilder

There is no stopping budding actress Charlotte Salt (above). At just 16, she has already appeared in BBC dramas The Whistle Blower, The Inspector Lynley Mysteries and In A Land Of Plenty, and is determined to make acting her future career, too.

“I have wanted to act since I saw The Little Mermaid when I was four,” she grins. “I have spent all my spare time at acting classes, youth theatres and drama festivals, as well as doing drama at school. I really can’t think of anything else I’d rather do.”

Potteries lass Charlotte attends school in Stone, Staffordshire and got her first TV break when the BBC was looking for local talent to play children in In A Land Of Plenty. She was cast as the young Kay Wragge and the acting bug bit deep.

“My school has been very supportive,” she says, gratefully. “I am studying for my GCSEs and had to have a tutor on set for Born And Bred. But I don’t care how much hard work I have to do; I love this so much that it is all worth it.

“Playing Helen has been wonderful – she is such a lovely character.”

The young actress continues: “She is very innocent but can be quite sharp when she wants to be. Moving to this tiny village, from Manchester, wasn’t what she wanted at all – until she claps eyes on Eddie, the hunky mechanic. She falls for him big time!”

Ross Little is Michael Gilder

Ross plays mischievous 11-year-old Michael, who manages to get into plenty of scrapes, together with his best friend, Ciaran. This is Ross’s first major role in a drama, though he has previously appeared in Coronation Street and alongside Sarah Lancashire in the ITV production, Seeing Red. Ross’s first taste of acting was in his school production of Jack And The Beanstalk.

Acting runs in Ross’s family. His older brother is the actor Ralf Little, who played “our Anthony” in The Royle Family, and who will be seen later this year starring with Neil Morrissey and Charles Dale in a new BBC drama, Paradise Heights.
Catherine and Philip Gilder

The two youngest members of the Gilder family are seven-year-old Catherine, played by Polly Thompson, and baby Philip, who is just 18 months old, played by twin brothers Cameron and Jacob Earley.
They may look like Jack Spratt and his wife, but Norman and Edna Pendleton’s food arrangements prove to be rather more troublesome. In fact, the stick-thin handyman’s problems are all down to eating everything his wife puts in front of him.

“Poor man, he has a dominating wife who bullies him mercilessly,” laughs Roger Lloyd Pack. “In fact, he is a disaster waiting to happen, eating a very high fat diet and being a smoker. But there was little publicity about those dangers in the Fifties.

“So, when he starts behaving rather strangely and finally collapses, no one is quite sure what’s wrong with him at first.”

The painstakingly re-created era brings back memories for Roger, who was born in 1944 and was at prep school during the Fifties. “You can’t really blame people for going mad with food after all the rationing,” he says.

“I can vividly remember ration books and the shortages that went on well into the Fifties. I was lucky at school, though; I seem to remember having plenty of sweets. In fact, my teeth are still suffering to this day!”

Much-loved as the laconic Trigger in Only Fools And Horses, Roger went straight from Born And Bred to filming the long-awaited BBC Christmas special. “The viewing figures were extraordinary because it had been so anticipated,” he says. “It is astonishing to be in something that has spanned 21 years.”

The son of Fifties actor Charles Lloyd Pack, Roger is also the father of successful film actress Emily Lloyd. “There must be something in the genes,” he muses. “I remember I used to put on puppet shows even before I started school.

“But my father didn’t encourage, or dissuade me from following in his footsteps. Teachers at school did try and persuade me to go to
university and I wish I had now, but I was in too much of a hurry to get going.”

Instead, Roger went to RADA but admits that he found it difficult to try to earn a living at first. “I turned down television roles in order to play lots of different characters on stage. The more camps you’ve got your feet in, the better.

“It’s strange that I have done so much comedy, though – I really can be quite serious.” In fact, Roger has formed his own company to record the works of poets such as Keats. “He was a feisty, lusty, young Cockney who lived life vigorously,” he says with passion.

“He wasn’t the fey, romantic person people imagine. I feel his voice should be part of our life and times.”
Denise Welch was just getting used to having baby Louis as the much-wanted brother to her 12-year-old son Matthew, when her family grew an alarming rate – she took on the role of a pregnant mum to six girls.

“There she is, delighted to be carrying her seventh child because she’s convinced it’s a boy – I couldn’t relate to that at all!” laughs the ex-Coronation Street star. “Except that, as she was only supposed to be three months’ pregnant, there was no padding required – I still hadn’t lost my ‘tum’ from having Louis.”

Fans of the glamorous blonde will do a double take when they see her as stubborn, hard-working Edie. “She is totally different from anything I’ve ever played on television,” the actress smiles, clearly delighted. “I’ve only played dowdy, frumpy, no-make-up parts in the theatre.

“Then I went on to play a high-class hooker in The Vice, done up to the nines and wearing Prada and Versace. Brilliant! That’s what I love about this job.”

Denise is married to Auf Wiedersehen, Pet star Tim Healy, who is back in a brand-new series of the hit show this spring on BBC ONE. She reveals that she drew on her own experiences of pregnancy to play Edie, who is warned that going ahead with her pregnancy could put a fatal strain on her heart.

“This was the 43-year-old star’s first big role since leaving Coronation Street and she admits that one of the reasons she took it on was because it was close to home. “We live in the Ribble Valley, which is just a car ride away. Ideally, I’d just like to film in my back garden,” she laughs.

Born: County Durham
Trained: Mountview Theatre School, London
Appeared in: Coronation Street, Soldier Soldier, Spender.
It was while growing up in Whitley Bay that Denise caught the acting bug. “I went to the same school as Alun Armstrong and a teacher there, Terry Cudden, was my mentor. Then my father encouraged me to go to drama school, even though I’d been accepted at teacher training college.”

Denise went to Mountview Theatre School in Crouch End and has appeared in TV hits *Byker Grove*, *Spender* and *Soldier Soldier*. “I always felt I’d get better roles as I got older,” she says. “I’m a character actress at heart and I’ve always been motivated by change – which is why I finally left *Corrie*. I never wanted glamour parts – just good work.”