

Auf Wiedersehen, Pet

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The “Magnificent Seven” Ride Again!

One of television’s most popular dramas, *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*, comes to BBC One

Auf Wiedersehen, Pet, the hit drama of the Eighties about an intrepid band of British brickies, is back on TV screens this spring on BBC One – but this time they’re the bosses with a business proposition that could make them all rich.

The production reunites the original cast of Tim Healy (Dennis), Jimmy Nail (Oz), Timothy Spall (Barry), Kevin Whately (Neville), Christopher Fairbank (Moxey) and Pat Roach (Bomber), with newcomer Noel Clarke (Wyman), original writers Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais and creator Franc Roddam.

The last 15 years have been kinder to some of the lads than others. One drives a Bentley, another a taxi. Marriages have come and gone. But when Oz turns up with an irresistible offer, the “Magnificent Seven” find that the friendships they made on the road to Düsseldorf have, against the odds, survived.

The days of Thatcher and three million unemployed have gone. But the brave new world of Tony Blair, IT and gangsta rap can be strange and comfortless, leaving these working-class heroes happy to try their luck at one more job. Having cemented their friendships in Germany and Spain, this new series takes the group on an incredible journey from Middlesbrough to Arizona, as they win a contract to dismantle the Middlesbrough Transporter Bridge. But what do you do with it when you’ve taken it down?

“The timing seems absolutely right for the return of *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*,” says Controller of Drama Commissioning, Jane Tranter. “The fact that all the original team have embraced it so enthusiastically demonstrates the power that the show still has to excite people.”

Creator Franc Roddam says: “It’s moved on, in spirit and in time. The maturity of the characters has brought a new edge and humour to the story-telling and there are plenty of surprises along the way.”

Laura Mackie, Head of Drama Serials, adds: “I’m really proud that we’ve been able to reunite such a fantastic team. *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* has a special place in people’s hearts and I hope a new audience will love it just as much.”

Guest stars include Branka Katic, who plays Tatiana, Barry’s gorgeous Russian wife, and Bill Nighy as disgraced MP, Jeffrey Grainger, who forms an unlikely bond in prison with Oz and provides him with a chance to make his money.

Auf Wiedersehen, Pet is produced by Joy Spink and directed by Paul Seed. The executive producers are Head of Drama Serials, Laura Mackie, and series creator, Franc Roddam.

Introduction

Cowboys and Indians are just one element of this new series of *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*. The “cowboys” being the magnificent seven British brickies-turned-bosses and the “indians” being the native Americans, in a journey that takes them from Middlesbrough to Arizona and back again.

The new series builds on the foundations of the first two, which were broadcast in the Eighties. Creator Franc Roddam has managed to achieve the impossible in not only reuniting all the original cast (with the exception of Gary Holton who played Wayne – known as “London” – and who tragically died in October 1985) but also the original writers Ian La Frenais and Dick Clement.

“When we were writing for the characters after all this time it was just like slipping on an old pair of shoes,” says Ian La Frenais, one half of the successful writing partnership. “Although all the actors wear far more expensive shoes now than they did in 1983! The characters are still basically the same people, they are just a bit older.”

And Dick Clement, the other half of the pair who have brought us such well-loved shows as *The Likely Lads* and *Porridge*, adds: “Coming back to this 15 years later, we had to address what had happened to the characters but also what changes had happened in Britain.”

The success of the first two series was largely to do with the fact that they reflected the society that people were living in at the time. “It had something to say about the industrial age,” explains Franc Roddam, who is also an executive producer on the new series.

“There we were, in 1982, the economy was starting to decline, the working man’s position was shifting and we were seeing the end of the blue collar society and the beginning of the white collar society. And now here we are at the beginning of this new century and I realised that just as we had the shift from blue collar to white collar, there was now a new shift to the electronic age, so I thought this was a good time to bring the series back.”

All the characters have their own stories to tell. Inevitably, much has happened in their lives since the heady days of Pils, schnitzel and women in Germany.

“The most dramatic change has been to Barry, who has made some money,” says Clement. “His story is fairly unpredictable and he has a significant character arc during the course of the series.”

La Frenais agrees. “It is a nice surprise to find that Barry is tooling around in a brand-new Bentley and has a very sexy Russian wife. But Oz was the trickiest character to write for. He couldn’t still be that unbearable, loud, big-gobbed yob but, on the other hand, that’s who the audience want to see, so we’ve created a character who has changed but still has many elements of the old Oz.

“The others haven’t changed a great deal and in a sense that’s part of their sadness. They went to Germany to change things and they sacrificed their life for their work in order to make things better. But after all these years a lot of those dreams still haven’t been realised.”

This time, the guys are the brains and the money behind their new venture, taking the rather unfamiliar role of being in charge, which could lead to disaster. “Being a boss isn’t always a comfortable thing for many people,” explains Clement. “Some of them take to it more easily than others. Dennis doesn’t start out as the leader. He’s a very reluctant leader but all of them want him to take charge and no one else is prepared to do it, so he does.”

Fans of the first series will want to know when they get to see the guys in the hut again, and witness that unique camaraderie and banter.

“It takes a while for the hut to make its entrance but the new series does have a hut,” laughs Dick Clement. “The irony is not lost on any of them when they realise that, however much they have all changed, they are once again

in a hut. They are now on the other side of the payroll but that doesn't make it any easier for them, they still have to roll up their sleeves and do some graft."

"It's rather like *Porridge*," says La Frenais. "We put a bunch of really good characters in a very captive situation. The hut was very much like Slade prison. They were fishes out of water."

The plot for *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* centres around the Middlesbrough Transporter Bridge, an imposing structure that stretches across the River Tees in the north-east of England. The group embarks on a bizarre mission to dismantle the bridge and sell it.

"I wanted to show the contrast between high-tech and low-tech in this series," says Franc Roddam. "I started doing my research and I found that, if you wanted to demolish the Transporter Bridge and you used modern technology, it would cost about £2 million to do it. But if you did it the old-fashioned way, using cheap labour, you could take it down for £75,000."

So that's what they do. Using foreign workers from Kosovo and Albania, the guys set about dismantling the bridge – but naturally things don't quite go to plan!

"If everything went smoothly for the lads, it would all be over in five minutes and there would be no series," explains Clement. "You have to throw them a few curves along the way. If life was completely smooth, it would be lacking any drama."

One of the "curves" to which Clement refers is a trip across the Atlantic to Arizona in the United States of America for a meeting with a tribe of American Indians.

"I wanted a major contrast to the north-east of England," says Roddam. "America is one of the new aspirational places for people to go on holiday and I think there is a great affection in England for native American Indians. It's a fantastic location and the Grand Canyon is just around the corner!"

"You take these wonderful British characters and you put them somewhere else and, by seeing how they behave in this new environment, you get to know England better, as well as getting to know Arizona."

The inspiration for the first series came from a group of men based in the north-east of England who found themselves unable to find work as the economy changed, and were forced to try their luck in Germany in order to provide for their wives and family.

"I grew up on Teesside," says Roddam. "I went back in the early Eighties to visit and I discovered that a lot of my friends were going off to work in Germany, leaving their wives and girlfriends behind. 'Auf wiedersehen, pet,' in other words! I went across to Germany myself and found hundreds of guys from the north-east working on these building sites."

"There was a character I had met who was very much like Dennis [played by Tim Healy]. He looked after the group and I discovered that if a group of men are living together, they have to have a leader or they all end up pulling in different directions. And there was also a wild character from Redcar who was very much like Oz."

Whenever the cast speak to people who actually worked in Germany, they can always identify with their *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* characters. The response from the public when the series first aired in 1983 was incredible.

"The success of the first series surprised me," Clement says. "I had no inkling that it would take off. I remember a key moment. Alan Bleasdale's *Boys From The Blackstuff* was also out at the same time and I had gone to a football match, it was Liverpool v Newcastle United, and I heard the Newcastle fans taunting the Liverpool fans by saying: 'Ee, Aye, Addio, Oz is better than Yosser!' And that was a moment when I thought we'd got something that has clicked with the public."

Ian La Frenais agrees: "The reaction to the first series surprised us all. The critical response and

then people talking about it was so positive. The public really liked these guys.”

It is difficult to pinpoint a single reason for its success, but Franc Roddam highlights one particular key area: “I think the series was so successful because it reflected the society we were living in and it had something to say about the end of the industrial age.”

So, what of this new series? “We’ve gone for a few surprises but also tried to keep the balance between the old characters and the new,” says Clement.

La Frenais agrees: “We’ve tried to create something that will interest new viewers and at the same time re-invigorate those that used to be fans.”

Roddam adds with a wry smile: “Now we’re a little bit older we seem to work much better as a team! I think that this series has worked out better than I could have imagined. Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais have made it even better and added new dimensions to it that are fantastic.”

Auf Wiedersehen, Pet

Cast

Dennis Patterson Tim Healy
 Oz Osborne Jimmy Nail
 Barry Taylor Timothy Spall
 Neville Hope Kevin Whately
 Moxey Christopher Fairbank
 Bomber Pat Roach
 Wyman Noel Clarke

 Jeffrey Grainger Bill Nighy
 Brenda Hope Julia Tobin
 Tatiana Taylor Branka Katic
 Kadi Dragan Micanovic
 Joe Saugus Gordon Tootoosis
 The Medicine Man Saginaw Grant
 Sarah Emily Bruni
 Mickey Startup Michael Angelis
 Tommy Rankin Paul Loughran
 Rod Osborne Mark Stobbart
 DI Ingham Alan Stocks
 DI Andy Hateley Richard Ridings
 Yorgo John Kazek

Production Credits

Writers Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais
 Series devised by Franc Roddam
 Director Paul Seed
 Producer Joy Spink
 Executive Producers Franc Roddam and Laura Mackie
 Director of Photography John Kenway
 Production Designer Rob Harris
 Original Music Hardcore
 Make-up Designer Anne Oldham
 Costume Designer Justine Luxton
 Film Editor Dave King

Regional interest

<p>Page 11-12 Page 9-10</p> <p>Page 4-6 (Intro)</p>	<p>TYNE & WEAR</p> <p>Jimmy Nail (Oz) was born and grew up in Newcastle. Tim Healy (Dennis) was also born in Newcastle but now lives in Cheshire.</p> <p>Ian La Frenais (writer) comes from Whitley Bay on the North East coast and attended Dame Allan's School in Northumberland. He now lives and works in Los Angeles.</p>
<p>Page 15-16</p>	<p>NORTHUMBERLAND</p> <p>Kevin Whately (Neville) was born in Humshaugh in Northumberland and educated at Barnard Castle School. He now lives in Bucks.</p>
<p>Page 4-6 (Intro)</p>	<p>TEESSIDE</p> <p>Franc Roddam (executive producer) comes from Norton, near Stockton-on-Tees, but now lives in west London.</p>
<p>Page 13-14 Page 21-22 Page 17-18</p>	<p>LONDON</p> <p>Timothy Spall (Barry) was born and still lives in south London. Noel Clarke (Wyman) was born and brought up in west London. Chris Fairbank (Moxey) lives in east London.</p>
<p>Page 4-6 (Intro)</p>	<p>ESSEX</p> <p>Dick Clement (writer) was born in Westcliff-on-Sea and now lives and works in Los Angeles.</p>
<p>Page 19-20</p>	<p>BIRMINGHAM</p> <p>Pat Roach (Bomber) was born and still lives in Birmingham.</p>

Tim Healy is Dennis Patterson

Tim Healy's credits

TV – *Boys From The Bush*, *Common As Muck*, *The Grand*, *Heartburn Hotel*, *The Lost World*, *Murder In Mind*, *The Jury*, *Breezeblock*

Theatre – *Twelve Angry Men* (Comedy Theatre), *Twelfth Night* (with the Live Theatre Company)

Film – *Shadow Run*

Tim Healy on Dennis: “Dennis came back from Spain with £25,000 that he’d got from Ally Fraser. He lost all the money and is now lost, lonely and hasn’t got a woman. He’s really down at the beginning of this series but he finally becomes the Dennis we all used to know.”

Dennis's story

Since the end of the last series, things have taken a turn for the worse for Dennis.

He has seen two wives come and go, very rarely sees his children, lost all his money and has struggled to find work. He is now driving a cab around the rough parts of Newcastle and ferrying a drug dealer around to his customers. Dennis is pretty down on his luck and deserves an opportunity.



When we last saw Dennis, he was heading back to England with £25,000 in his back pocket! He was the brains behind the guys' plans and the one that was destined for a successful and prosperous future. So it is a surprise to see him down on his luck, driving a drugs dealer around the housing estates of Newcastle in order to scrape a living together.

“Dennis is really down at the start of this new series,” explains actor Tim Healy. “He’s the one that you wouldn’t expect to be doing what he is. But he couldn’t get any work at all in the

construction industry when he got back from Spain so ends up on his uppers.”

Unsurprisingly, when Oz comes up with this madcap idea to pull down the Transporter Bridge and sell it, Dennis can’t stump up his share of the capital. He relies on the generosity of the others to support him.

“In the first series, Dennis didn’t really want to be the boss, he was just voted to be the boss because he’s supposed to be the sensible one of

the gang. And then in the third series he finds himself being the boss again and because of that he gets his confidence back. To make him the boss again really does sort him out, it's exactly what he needs to save his life.

"I don't think any of us make very good bosses though! We might be in charge this time but we're still working men at heart. This new series is about how the guys survive. The humour comes from the fact that the guys are worlds apart but yet they share the same passions and the same feelings."

Much of the inspiration for this new series came from a sketch that Tim did two years ago together with fellow *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* actors Jimmy Nail and Kevin Whately. Actor Sammy Johnson played Stick in *Spender* and was a great friend of Tim and Jimmy. When he died, Tim Healy set up a trust fund and organised a charity performance at the City Hall in Newcastle with a line-up which included Lindisfarne and Ant and Dec. "We played Dennis, Oz and Neville on stage which had never been done before as we'd only ever played these characters on TV," explains Tim. "Dick and Ian wrote three sketches for us and they brought the house down."

Each sketch was set at a particular point in time; the early days in Düsseldorf, then sunny Spain and a third sketch brought the *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* story up to date.

It is a cause that is obviously close to Tim's heart. "The Trust was set up to raise money to encourage people in the North East to get involved in the performing arts. It's a breeding ground for talent. We've just given a young lad the opportunity to go to ballet school, a bit like the *Billy Elliot* story!"

All the money they make benefits people in the North East. They have their own theatre on the Quayside in Newcastle and a lot of upcoming Geordie actors, including Robson Green, have come through the Live Theatre Company.

Tim can easily relate to those just starting out, despite having been in the business himself for over 20 years. He still confesses to a few

butterflies when they began filming this new series. "I was nervous on the first day," he reveals. "But it came back to life when the six of us got back together and we started to find our characters again."

Filming in Arizona has been an enjoyable period for Tim but there's a couple of things missing for him: "I miss my family and I'm worried that the baby might not recognise me when I get back. To share this experience with them would be fantastic. To be here and work in these conditions is so different to being in England. It's great fun and it's a job I will never forget."

And there's one other passion that both Dennis and Tim share and are struggling to get by without: the latest news on the Magpies! Tim explains, "We've missed the Newcastle United match reports as we haven't been able to get any English papers and when Newcastle stuff Aston Villa you want to read about it!"

Did you know?

- Tim Healy is married to the former *Coronation Street* actress, Denise Welch, who he met at a mutual friend's dinner party.
- Together, Tim and Denise have two children.
- Tim appeared in *Coronation Street* himself in 1977 as a bingo caller.
- He is a founder member of the Live Theatre Company which was set up in 1983. Denise Welch, Kevin Whately and Madelaine Newton are also members.
- Tim used to be a paratrooper before becoming an actor.

Jimmy Nail is Oz (Leonard) Osborne

Jimmy Nail's credits

TV – *Spender, Crocodile Shoes*

Film – *Evita, Still Crazy, Danny The Champion Of The World*

Music – *10 Great Songs And An OK Voice* in 2001, *Crocodile Shoes* in 1994 which sold over 900,000 copies. He has also had hits with *Ain't No Doubt* (1992) and *Love Don't Live Here Anymore* (1985).

Oz's story

Oz has been in prison where he met disgraced MP Jeffrey Grainger (Bill Nighy) but has come out a reformed character.

Oz is separated from his wife, Marjorie, and hasn't seen his son, Rod, in a good few years. He now lives in a small village near Middlesbrough.



Jimmy Nail's showbusiness career started over 20 years ago and, since then, he has gone to become a familiar face in the world of film, television and music.

It was undoubtedly the role of Oz in *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* which put him on the first rung of the ladder. Back then, Oz had a reputation for being a loud-mouthed yob but things have changed for Oz.

When we first meet Oz in this new series he has spent time in prison and come out a changed man. So, what has happened to the "old Oz"?

"Oz was the trickiest to write for," explains Ian La Frenais, one of the writers. "We've created a character who has been through a lot of changes but many of the characteristics of the old Oz keep resurfacing."

Dick Clement, La Frenais's writing partner on this and the previous two series of *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* agrees. "We see a different side of Oz when we first meet him as he is much more the entrepreneur of the group. But as soon as you scratch the veneer on top, the old Oz isn't very far away!"

And Oz himself says, in the first episode of the new series, “The old Oz has to appear every once in a while or people might think I’m Cliff Richard!”

The new Oz doesn’t drink, enjoys the quiet life and endeavours to keep on the right side of the law. The one big thing missing in his life is his son, Rod, and with encouragement from the other guys, in particular Wayne’s son, Wyman (Noel Clarke), he attempts to reconcile his differences with his son. Being a reformed character now, Oz hopes to surprise his son but it is Rod who has all the surprises.

Getting all the cast back together for this third series was no mean feat and couldn’t have happened without Jimmy Nail. It was a chance meeting with the series creator, Franc Roddam, that set the ball rolling. Roddam explains, “I was in this obscure street in London and I bumped into Jimmy Nail, who I hadn’t seen for two years, and I said ‘I’m thinking of doing *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* again,’ and he said, ‘I’ll do it,’ just like that! With Jimmy’s help, I called up the rest of the actors and they all agreed to do it and I couldn’t believe I had a full house.”

As the group of British brickies embarked on their magnificent journey from Middlesbrough to Arizona, Jimmy Nail drew comparisons between this new series and the Alfred Hitchcock film, *North By North West* suggesting that the series could be renamed *West By North East!*

Following the very successful second series of *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*, Jimmy’s career has taken a dazzling upwards course. He starred as country crooner Jed Shepperd in the hit BBC One television series *Crocodile Shoes*, followed by a role as a maverick Geordie detective in *Spender*, which he co-wrote with Ian La Frenais. On the big screen he had a role in the Hollywood blockbuster, *Evita*, and also played bass guitarist Les Wickes in the Clement and La Frenais film *Still Crazy*, which starred Jimmy’s *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* colleagues, Timothy Spall and Bill Nighy.

It’s not only his acting ability that Jimmy is known for but also his singing, having enjoyed chart hits with the singles, *Love Don’t Live Here Anymore* and *Ain’t No Doubt* and two platinum albums.

“Jimmy’s got a wonderful voice,” enthuses Roddam. “He’s a very good musician.”

Away from life in the public eye, Jimmy likes nothing better than relaxing at home with his wife and their two children and supporting his beloved Newcastle United FC.

Did you know?

- Jimmy Nail used to be in a rock band called King Crabs.
- His dad was a professional footballer with Huddersfield Town FC.
- He used to be a welder before he got into singing and acting.

Timothy Spall is Barry Taylor

Timothy Spall's credits

TV – *Frank Stubbs Promotes, Our Mutual Friend, Shooting The Past, Perfect Strangers*
Film – *Still Crazy, Secrets & Lies, Lucky Break, Vanilla Sky*

Timothy Spall on Barry: “The last time you saw Barry he was married to Hazel. That marriage is now over and, in the last two years, he’s become extremely rich and has acquired a gorgeous Russian wife. He lives in a ranch-style palace just outside Droitwich with his wife.”

Barry's story

When we left Barry, he had just got married to Hazel (Melanie Hill), but this marriage ended when Hazel left him for someone else. But Barry has since done well for himself . He is now married to a gorgeous young Russian woman, Tatiana (Branka Katic), and he lives with her and her brother, Kadi (Dragan Micanovic).

He has been running his own import-export business which has become very successful over the past two years, making him a millionaire.



Timothy Spall first took on the role of boring Barry Taylor, the motor-cycle riding Brummie electrician in *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*, in 1983 but since then Barry has swapped his motor-cycle for a Bentley.

Over the last two years, Barry's life has changed enormously, as Tim explains: “When you see Barry in this series he is driving a Bentley, smoking a Davidoff cigar and on his mobile phone to his beautiful wife, Tatiana, who is on their skiing machine at home. He dresses in Versace and has all the trappings and all the smugness of someone who is severely rich.”

Barry has made his money from an import-export business which he set up a couple of years ago. His company sells out-of-date food to the Russian army and imports Lada cars which Barry's Russian workforce renovate and then sell to customers in Russia, where they are something of a status symbol.

And he is now married to Tatiana (played by Branka Katic) and is the envy of all his friends. “It's a great opportunity for my character being married to this beautiful Moscovite who is obsessed with shopping for expensive clothes!”

When Barry learns of the plan for the guys to get back in business together he signs up straight away. “He agrees to join this enterprise of Oz’s more as an old times’ sake thing,” says Tim. “Barry was quite innocent and really the person you would least expect to be successful but he can easily afford to get involved in this scheme. The guys never have an easy ride when they are together, it’s always a bit of a rollercoaster but, invariably, they triumph of sorts in the end.”

Tim was delighted to hear that the series was to be brought back again after so long. “It was very odd picking up Barry after all these years,” says Tim. “People remember Barry, he’s a very distinctive type of character. We didn’t realise at the time that we had made a real classic, it was incredibly well received and it’s the one job that I’ve done that always crops up as being loved.”

“This time, the lads are the bosses and when they are taking the bridge down most of the labour is from eastern Europe. This new series is still very much about England and the current climate, the effects that the modern age has.”

Tim was bowled over to be filming in Arizona. “Arizona is beautiful,” he muses. “It’s breathtaking, it has lived up to and surpassed all my expectations. You’ve got this contrast between the grey of England and the red, sunny countryside which is an important thing in the series.”

When he’s not away filming, Tim’s life is in south London where he grew up the son of a scaffolder-turned-postal clerk and a hairdresser. He lives with his wife, Shane, and their three children.

“The scripts are fantastic, Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais have excelled themselves,” he says of the new series. “What they have done is make a virtue out of the differences in these characters and the way life has changed them. I hope this series will be as good, if not better, than the first two.”

Since playing dopey electrician Barry, Timothy Spall has gone on to a distinguished career

which spans work with leading directors in film, theatre and television.

In the theatre he’s been directed in lead roles by Stephen Daldry, David Edgar and Trevor Nunn and he’s featured in films directed by Kenneth Branagh, Clint Eastwood, Ken Russell and Mike Leigh. Spall has also appeared in several of Dickens’s works. He wowed viewers with his performance as Mr Venus in BBC Two’s *Our Mutual Friend*, which won him a Bafta nomination for Best Actor and, 20 years ago, he played Wackford Squeers Junior in the Royal Shakespeare Company’s famous *Nicholas Nickleby*. Tim’s son, Raff, also played Mr Squeers in a performance of *Nicholas Nickleby* at the Lyric Theatre in London.

Tim’s magnificent career is all thanks to a keen-eyed teacher. He so impressed her with his cowardly lion in a school production of *The Wizard Of Oz* that she persuaded him to try acting. He did and was accepted at RADA although he nearly signed up with the Army instead. Despite being mistaken for a window cleaner on his first day at RADA, he made his film debut in 1979 in *The Who’s Quadrophenia*, directed by Franc Roddam, and quickly became a familiar face on stage and screen.

Did you know?

- Tim was awarded the OBE by Her Majesty The Queen on New Year’s Eve, 1999.
- He was top of his year at RADA in 1978.
- He starred in Mike Leigh’s 1982 TV movie *Home Sweet Home*, beginning a collaboration that has, so far, lasted 20 years. “I’ve been married to Mike for as long as I’ve been married to my wife!”
- Tim had a cameo role in *Vanilla Sky*, the film in which Tom Cruise and Penelope Cruz famously met.

Kevin Whately is Neville Hope

Kevin Whately's credits

TV – *Inspector Morse, Peak Practice, The Broker's Man, Pure Wickedness, Murder In Mind*
 Film – *The English Patient, Paranoia*

Kevin Whately on Neville: “Neville was last seen disappearing on the back of a boat with all the other lads towards North Africa. How he got back I’ve no idea! Now he’s got his own business but he’s in trouble with the VAT man so he’s not as affluent as he seems.”

Neville's story

Neville is still married to Brenda (Julia Tobin), the last original “pet”. They have two teenage daughters and a new baby. He runs his own business selling pre-fabricated Swedish houses and has the VAT man on his back.



Kevin Whately is one of Britain's best loved character actors. He has achieved wide recognition through his portrayal of Sergeant Lewis in *Inspector Morse*. He subsequently took on the role of Jack Kerruish in *Peak Practice* and played the idealistic, yet somewhat arrogant GP, in Lucy Gannon's *Pure Wickedness*. But the role that provided the platform to this success is surely that of the naïve Neville in *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*.

In the past it was hard for Neville. He was newly married and he found it difficult having to work away from his family but nowadays he has his own business and is in the fortunate position of being surrounded by women.

Kevin explains, “He’s still married to Brenda (Julia Tobin) and he has two teenage daughters and also a new baby girl. He’s still a little bit hen-pecked but now with the added pressure of teenage daughters who are getting up to all sorts of stuff!”

But despite being happily married, Neville's eye does stray from time to time, particularly in the direction of his sexy secretary, Lorraine (Liz White).

Kevin is enjoying playing Neville again after the 15-year break between series. “The idea in this series is that we're the forgotten tribe of England, the technically skilled workmen who

are now struggling. As soon as we got all six of us into one shot it clicked straight away and from then it's felt pretty easy."

This could largely be due to the fact that the six actors have remained very close friends. "The great thing is that we have all stayed pals for over 20 years and there's rarely a bad word between us, we have a lot of fun," explains Kevin. "We all became very close during the first series. We were a similar age and the bond seems to have stood the test of time. We're all godfathers to each other's kids and our kids have grown up together."

Kevin has two children with his wife, Madelaine Newton who is also an actress and appeared in *When The Boat Comes In* amongst other dramas. They met when they appeared in the same theatre production in their home town of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and now live in Buckinghamshire. Away from the world of showbusiness, Kevin likes nothing better than a rambling walk through the woods near his home. He also enjoys listening to music and has a diverse range of musical tastes from Senegal-born singer Baaba Maal to Pink Floyd and Dire Straits. He plays guitar himself and was a folk singer when he left drama school, forming a duo with a friend.

Having filmed the previous series in Germany and Spain, in this series, the Magnificent Seven find themselves in the amazing location of Arizona which Kevin, like the rest of the cast, loved every minute of.

"It's a fantastic contrast to Middlesbrough to come to Arizona," Kevin enthuses. "America is such a friendly place and we had a ball. The day we arrived, Chris and I hired a car and went up to Bryce Canyon and then one Sunday, Tim Healy, Noel Clarke and I went out with Saginaw and some of the native Americans on Lake Powell."

It is Oz's business deal with the Middlesbrough Transporter Bridge that brings the guys out to America in a bid to make everyone some money, but, inevitably, things don't go quite to plan. "I think if everything worked out successfully then

we wouldn't have a story," laughs Kevin. "This time we're the bosses but we're not life's successes. We get by, we're always going to have to work, it's never going to come easy."

Kevin's life, however, has been much more successful than Neville's, so much so that after the first series transmitted, Kevin was staggered by the level of fame that he and the other cast members had achieved.

"It was like being in a successful rock band," reminisces Kevin. "I remember Jimmy, Tim Healy and I went to a Billy Connolly concert at the City Hall in Newcastle and we were literally mobbed in the foyer which was really quite scary. The show was due to start and eventually Billy had to send his stage crew around to physically lift us into the show and then smuggle us out at the end. We laugh about it now but it was scary at the time!"

Despite moments like these, Kevin is proud of his own achievements and those of the rest of the cast. He adds, "We've enjoyed each other's successes over the years so there's no feeling of envy between us."

Did you know?

- Kevin's own daughter played his on-screen daughter, Debbie, in the first two series of *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*.
- Kevin's wife, Madelaine Newton, also appeared in the early episodes as Dennis's girlfriend, Christine Chadwick.
- Kevin originally had ambitions to become a doctor, then trained as an accountant before studying at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London.
- One of Kevin's first acting jobs was a role in *Coronation Street* in which he played a character also called Kevin.

Christopher Fairbank is Albert Moxey

Christopher Fairbank's credits

TV – *Spender, Prime Suspect III, Crocodile Shoes, The Scarlet Pimpernel*

Film – *The Fifth Element*

Chris Fairbank on Moxey: “Moxey hasn’t changed. His life continues, taking whatever comes up and dealing with it in the best way that he can. He has an innate sense of survival which keeps him going.”

Moxey's story

Moxey was last seen being chased across the Straits of Gibraltar by Customs & Excise and the Spanish Police! Life hasn’t changed much for Moxey, he’s now working as a kitchen porter in Liverpool.



In the first two series of *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* Moxey was always to be found in trouble, always looking for another fire and another jail sentence. In this series, he seems to have put his arson past behind him but trouble just seems to follow him around.

“He’s a guy who is essentially out of touch with mainstream life,” explains Chris in a gap during filming in Arizona. “He has an innate sense of survival which keeps him going but being a responsible adult, raising kids and holding down a regular job, that is way out of his ballpark.”

Unlike the rest of the characters, Moxey has never married and doesn’t have children. In fact he is working as a kitchen porter in a club in Liverpool. The owner of the club is a local gangster, Mickey Startup (Michael Angelis), who the police are after. They look to Moxey to help them, but of course he can’t stay on the right side of the law for too long and risks everything in order to be reunited with his old friends again.

“What Moxey misses and has missed over the intervening years is the sense of family that he gets when he’s with the rest of the guys. They

are his life really. There's a chemistry between them all which puts Moxey back on his feet and he seems to be able to function really well within the hierarchy of the group."

"The story in this series revolves around the Transporter Bridge in Middlesbrough. I think the inspiration for that came from the fact that in 1968 someone bought London Bridge. We are the bosses this time but the wonderful twist is that although the guys take on the role of bosses they are in fact the biggest victims of all."

Life for Chris couldn't be more different to Moxey. With no hint of a Scouse accent, he is happily married and lives in east London. He, like many of the others, seems to have found it relatively easy to rediscover Moxey inside himself, certainly once he slipped on that familiar old woolly hat!

"It's a dream to play because there's so far to go with the character. In a sense it's revisiting but also exploring further as there's a lot more meat on the bone for Moxey in this series."

Chris draws comparisons between the relationships that both the characters and the actors have in real life. "Now feels like the right time to get back together again. We've all kept in touch over the years, largely because there were a lot of children born during the first two series and kids always hold you together. We get on so well as people in our real lives and also the characters too. The way they have been built and created and how they spark off one another works equally strongly. It's been a blast from day one."

And it's not just working with such good friends that Chris is enjoying but also the opportunity to film in such a fantastic location as Arizona.

"Arizona is awesome," he enthuses. "Wherever you look, wherever you go, it is just spectacular, quite unbelievable. I've never been here before but I will certainly be coming back. It's not just the scenery which words don't come close to describing but the energy here that is so different to anywhere else that I have been."

Chris will be seen later this year in the BBC One drama, *Paradise Heights*, alongside Neil Morrissey, Charles Dale and Ralf Little.

Did you know?

- Although Moxey is a central character in *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*, he didn't appear until the second episode of the first series.

Pat Roach is Brian “Bomber” Busbridge

Pat Roach’s credits

Film – *A Clockwork Orange, Never Say Never Again, Willow, The Return Of The Musketeers, Robin Hood: Prince Of Thieves*

Sport – Held the British & European Heavyweight Championships in wrestling

Pat Roach on Bomber: “All the boys were very much at a loose end when we left them but when Oz gets us back together for this bridge job we are all more than pleased.”

Bomber’s story

In the previous series Bomber was on his way back from Spain having achieved absolutely nothing except a sun tan! Bomber has now got four children and three grand-children.



Pat Roach is as well known for his wrestling as he is for his acting. In the wrestling ring he beats off his opponents with his power and aggression but on screen his best known character couldn’t be more different. As Bomber the bricklayer in *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*, Pat plays a shy character who keeps himself very much to himself.

“Bomber has never really left me,” Pat declares emphatically. “He’s a character I’ve been very fond of all these years, quite a nice character, he’s not hard to get on with at all. So, stepping back into Bomber after all this time hasn’t been a problem.”

Bomber tells the other guys very little about what his life has entailed during the years since they last saw each other. “All the boys were very much at a loose end when we left them 15 years ago,” explains Birmingham-born Pat. “Bomber has now got four children and three grand-children apart from that he’s still a bit lost.”

This contrasts deeply with Pat’s own life. He couldn’t have been busier in recent years. He’s a successful wrestler who lists Bill Joyce and Tony St Clair among his heroes and runs a Health Centre in his home-town of Birmingham. He’s also just released a biography called *If* which traces Pat’s life from poverty stricken childhood

to celebrity. And he has specialised in playing movie villains in *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* and *Never Say Never Again*.

Exercise is something that Pat still takes extremely seriously even when away on location filming and Arizona was no exception. “I’m managing to do some training here to keep fit, I even managed to get some of the crew in the gym last night and we had quite a class together!”

Like many of the cast, Pat isn’t sure just what it is that has made *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* such a big success over the years. “I think people liked the varied characters,” he reflects. “From Moxey the tea-leaf, always in and out of jail, to Dennis, a leader amongst losers, to Oz who was just plain crazy! We speak to guys who have actually worked in Germany and they say ‘Oh yeah, all those characters were with us in Germany.’”

But, this time around, the roles are reversed and the gang take on more responsibility. As Pat explains, they draw on their own experiences of shacking up together in the hut in Germany.

“We’re the bosses but of course we don’t exploit people, we feel for them very much. There’s the immigrant workers who are on hard times and we’re finding them work and try to help them find better digs. We go to all this trouble to make sure the workers are well-looked after and yet when we go out to Arizona they end up living in a hut again ourselves!”

In reality Arizona has been a very enjoyable location for Pat. “The views are just wonderful. We’ve been to the Grand Canyon which is nearby and some other fantastic places and in between we’ve had to do some work,” he laughs.

Did you know?

- Pat has appeared in all three of the *Indiana Jones* films playing four different characters.

Noel Clarke is Wyman Norris

Noel Clarke's credits

TV – *Metrosexuality*, *Judge John Deed*, *Waking The Dead*

Noel Clarke on Wyman: “Wyman is a Londoner and he’s a DJ who plays at Neville’s daughter’s birthday party. He comes up with the money for the bridge venture and after that he just seems to stick around, events keep happening and he just seems to hang around.”

Wyman's story

Wyman is Wayne’s son and his mother is from Camberwell. Wayne has now died and he never played a big part in Wyman’s upbringing.

Wyman works as a DJ in London.



For newcomer Noel Clarke, this is his first big break in television and he is grabbing it with both hands!

“Getting this job was one hell of a buzz for me,” Noel enthuses. “I was about to start something else so I had to choose! I’ve never done a job this big so it’s all just great.”

He admits it was a bit daunting at first working with six other actors who had all known each other for over 20 years. “One day I was sitting in a bar and then I looked up and turned to my left and sitting there was Kevin Whately, turned to my right and there was Tim Spall and I

thought to myself ‘I’m in a bar in Arizona with Kevin Whately, Timothy Spall, Jimmy Nail and Tim Healy!’ Occasionally I have moments like that I and feel like this can’t really be happening to me but all the actors have been really good to me.”

It was hard for Wyman too, meeting up with six of his father’s friends and then going into business with them. Noel explains, “Certain characters like Oz don’t accept Wyman straight away and I think Wyman is probably a little bit frightened of Oz. Oz never really got on with Wyman’s father, Wayne. There was always that London-Geordie rivalry between them. But

there is a really nice scene when Oz and Wyman get to a new level where there's almost a father/son thing going on."

It is nice for Wyman to have a father figure around, as his own father, Wayne, wasn't around very much when Wyman was growing up. "Wayne was a bit of a womaniser," Noel laughs. "He met this woman and Wyman was the result. Wayne's probably got hundreds of other kids that he doesn't even know about!"

Wyman jumps at the chance of going into business with the other guys. "The bridge idea comes up and Wyman comes up with the money and so he's in. It's as simple as that!"

Noel's adventure doesn't end there as filming *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* took him and the other cast out to the exotic location of Arizona, Canyon country.

One of the scenes being filmed features a group of native American Indians performing an Honour Dance to welcome the guys to their reservation. "You see things like this on TV," says Noel. "But witnessing it live is incredible. Everyone went really quiet while they were rehearsing and then when they stopped we all applauded. I think everyone appreciated the magnificence of it."

"I've been to the States before but coming to Arizona makes me appreciate things a lot more. Everywhere you look is just breathtaking, it's indescribable, you have to see it to believe it. I've seen pictures of the Grand Canyon before but you come here and everywhere you look is just amazing. I think I should just retire now, I don't see things getting much better than this!"

Fortunately, retirement doesn't look to be an option for Noel Clarke. He's busy writing his own scripts, one of which has been turned into a short film and was made in March, and he's about to appear on stage at the Royal Court Theatre in *Where Do We Live*, directed by Richard Wilson. He might be the new kid on the block but he's here to stay.

Bill Nighy is Jeffrey Grainger

Bill Nighy on Grainger: “Jeffrey Grainger is a disreputable man who met Oz when they were both in jail and it’s revealed quite early on that Grainger is not all he’s cracked up to be.”

The inspiration behind the scheme that brings the “magnificent seven” back together comes from disgraced MP Jeffrey Grainger, played by Bill Nighy.

Jeffrey is a disreputable character who spent time in prison with Oz. When Oz saves his bacon, Grainger owes Oz. On their release from jail, he involves Oz and subsequently the rest of the guys in what turns out to be a rather rocky road to riches by dismantling and disposing of the Middlesbrough Transporter Bridge in a mega deal.

“Grainger has a very dodgy relationship with Oz,” explains Bill. “He imagines that every time they meet, Oz will smack him – which is in fact what he would like to do, I think! Grainger’s job really is to look suitably nervous every time they come within six feet of each other!”

Although Grainger initiates this business deal, not everything goes to plan. “It’s a really rich, funny story which tells of their exploits and how they get from Middlesbrough to Arizona. It’s a big journey and lots of great things happen along the way.”

For Bill it was a great privilege to be asked to play Grainger, particularly as he had been a big fan of the original series of *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*. “I, like the rest of the country, used to stay home every week to watch *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*. But I never imagined in a million years that I would one day be involved.”

But he’s finding it a strange experience being out on a beautiful location in Arizona, near Lake Powell. “Here I am in Arizona with the guys



from *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* and it’s such a surreal experience to hear all these Geordie accents mixed up with those of the native Americans and Arizonians,” he jokes. “We were in Middlesbrough and that was good, too, but when we came out here it’s just been sensational. Everyone here has walked around with their mouths open for the first few days, it’s the most spectacular landscape and one that it is a privilege to see.”

But it’s not such a welcome journey across the Atlantic for Grainger. “I’m about to be honoured by the local American Indian tribe but unbeknown to me the guys have something up their sleeve. I think I’m about to be humiliated,” he explains with a grin.

It’s not a pleasant outcome for Grainger but only the seven guys know what fate befalls him.

The American Indians

Gordon Tootoosis is Joe

Gordon Tootoosis on Joe: “When we were filming in Middlesbrough I stuck out like a sore thumb.”

For the English actors, filming in Arizona was an amazing experience. But for Canadian actor Gordon Tootoosis, it was the Middlesbrough location he found the more dramatic of the two.

“I think I stuck out like a sore thumb in Middlesbrough!” he smiles. “The climate, the land and the number of people was just staggering. I couldn’t imagine so many people fitting into such a small space of land! Where I come from there are wide open spaces with very few people.”

Home for Gordon is Canada. He was born on the Poundmaker Indian Reserve in Saskatchewan. At an early age he became a cowboy and is now a champion Calf Roper and Team Roper. He is also an accomplished native dancer and toured Canada, Europe and South America during the Sixties and Seventies. He competed and won many Championships on the North American Pow Wow circuit in traditional singing and dancing.

As he talks on location the native American dancers are rehearsing in the background, preparing for their Honour Dance scenes where they welcome the *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* group to Arizona, bells jangling as they walk and wearing the traditional brightly coloured costumes, complete with feathers and leather moccasins.

“The Navajo who are working on the show have kept their traditional dances and their traditional music. Many of these dancers here today I’ve known since they were very small. I’ve watched them dance for many years as we’ve travelled far and wide together on the pow wow circuit,” says Gordon proudly.

The biggest difference for Gordon working with the native American Indians and the native “Geordie builders” is the accents. “I can’t understand a lot of them as they have such a



heavy accent,” he laughs. “That’s another thing that I found while I was in Middlesbrough, people would come and talk to me and ask me what I was doing there but I had to keep asking people to repeat things.”

Back home in Canada the 60-year-old actor is probably best known for his role as villain Albert Golo in the hit series *North Of 60*. He made his film debut in 1972 in *Alien Thunder* with Donald Sutherland and has since gone on to work with some of the biggest names in the business. He rates Charlton Heston and Anthony Hopkins as the most impressive actors he’s worked with but there is one more he hopes to stand beside on a set. “I’d like to work with Marlon Brando, that would be the ultimate. He’s always been my hero.”

Off screen it is Gordon’s family that takes up much of his time and to whom he is clearly devoted. He married his wife, Irene, in 1965 and had three daughters, Disa, Alanna and Glynis, and adopted two sons, Lee and Clint. Sadly, Glynis died of cancer in 1997 and Gordon and Irene now bring up her four children. “I have had to make some major adjustments to my lifestyle in raising these little ones,” he explains. “I’m Mr Mom, I take care of my grandchildren and it’s a full-time job, these are long hours.”

The American Indians

Saginaw Grant is the Medicine Man

Saginaw Grant on The Medicine Man: “The Medicine Men are spiritual leaders and they have to agree with things that happen.”

Acclaimed American actor Saginaw Grant has enjoyed every minute on set filming the new series of *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* and he agrees with Gordon Tootosis, who plays Joe, on the biggest problem that he has encountered.

“It’s the accents! If they talked a little slower then they wouldn’t be so hard to understand. One of the actors, Tim Healy, said something to me and I had to ask him to repeat it and after he said it again then I could work it out.”

Saginaw plays The Medicine Man, who has a very important role to play, particularly in the scenes at the Honour Dance. Saginaw explains, “I bless the ground. The Medicine Men are spiritual guiders and they have to agree with things that happen. The Medicine Man thinks carefully about things and doesn’t answer outright when you ask him a question.”

Saginaw played a similar role in the film *War Party* where he played Freddy Man Wolf and was also directed by the creator of *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*, Franc Roddam. And that’s not the only connection between Saginaw and Franc. “It was a pleasure to work with Franc again and I am also godfather to his daughter. I haven’t seen her in a little while but I am hoping to see her in the next couple of months. I gave her a name in my language which translates as ‘Woman of the People’ and Franc tells me that she is a very independent woman.”

Saginaw’s tribal connections are something that he is very passionate about. He comes from the Sac and Fox Nation which originates from Wisconsin and have now settled in Oklahoma although Saginaw himself lives in California. He



uses his films to share some of his spiritual presence and wisdom to world audiences.

“People learn from their feelings, we all have it, it’s called spirituality and we are all born with it but it’s the way that you nurture it. In my belief my parents never taught me about God, they never taught me how to pray, that was all born within me. Because of this it allows me to enjoy life to the fullest and I do.”

Saginaw’s film credits include *The Adventures of Young Indiana Jones* and on television he has made appearances in *Baywatch* and *Dr Quinn, Medicine Woman*. He is also a lecturer and writer. With a good blend of working in film, spiritual wisdom and knowledge of Native Peoples, Saginaw is also Director of the Native Elders Advisory Board.

The locations

Middlesbrough

One of the key locations for the filming of *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* was Middlesbrough and its famous Transporter Bridge.

The Transporter Bridge is Teesside's most notable bridge. It was designed by the Cleveland Bridge and Engineering Company of Darlington. Building was started in 1906 and it opened on 17 October 1911. It was constructed at a cost of £68,026.

The Transporter Bridge is a giant crane-like structure which is a cross between a ferry and a bridge. Vehicles are transported across the river by means of a moving section, which is capable of carrying 600 persons or nine vehicles at a time, across the Tees to Port Clarence in two-and-a-half minutes.

Passengers and vehicles are lifted across the river on a large platform suspended from an overhead gantry. It is the only working bridge of its kind in England and one of only two in the world.

But there were three other transporter bridges in the UK:

- Widnes Transporter Bridge, which was opened in 1905 and then destroyed shortly after 1961 when another bridge was opened nearby.
- Newport Transporter Bridge over the River Usk in Monmouthshire, which was opened in 1906. It is still a working bridge and is fast becoming a tourist attraction in the area.
- Warrington Transporter Bridge, which was constructed in 1916 but hasn't been in use since 1964, although it is maintained in working order.

The Middlesbrough Transporter Bridge is 850 feet (255m) long, 225 feet (67.5m) high and the carrying car crosses over 160 feet above the river.

Today, Middlesbrough is a lively town with a population of about 150,000 – but back in 1830 it was little more than a sleepy hamlet of about 30 folk.

Middlesbrough's population grew from 40 people in 1829 to 7,600 in 1851, by which time it was fast becoming the biggest port on the Tees.

Why was the bridge built?

The world's first railway had been opened in 1825 to transport coal from the South Durham pits around Darlington to Stockton, the port on the River Tees, from where it was then shipped to London. However, the Tees was not navigable for the larger coal ships and so, in 1830, a group of Stockton businessmen decided to establish a new port further downstream around the hamlet of Middlesbrough and the town rapidly developed and prospered as industry blossomed.

By the early 1900s there were over 4,000 workmen employed in and around the Port Clarence area on the north side of the River Tees. As most of them lived on the Middlesbrough side, this meant that they had to cross the river at least twice daily. The logistics of this were a problem as the ferry boats that were operating at the time had an average passenger capacity of just 700. The one-way crossing took about 15 minutes and it soon became clear that this was not an efficient method of transportation.

Clearly, as industry expanded on the banks of the Tees, something had to be done about the river crossing. Finally, in 1906 the local council commissioned an engineer to prepare a report on improving the river facilities. He recommended the construction of a transporter bridge as the best option.

Today the Teesside area may be without the mighty shipyards which once lined the river's banks but its engineering heritage is reflected in this major landmark, the Middlesbrough Transporter Bridge.

Key facts about the Transporter Bridge

- Total length of the bridge 850 feet
- Highest point of the bridge 225 feet
- Weight of each of the main girders 163 tons
- Foundations sunk to a maximum depth of 90 feet
- Total amount of concrete in foundation 10,000 cubic feet
- Total amount of steel in bridge 2,600 tonnes
- Number of steps 210
- Number of travelling wheels 60
- Number of suspension ropes 30
- Dimensions of travelling car 50 feet by 39 feet

- It would take a gang of painters six weeks to paint the bridge, using about 250 gallons of paint.
- Every year, the bridge carries an average of 350,000 vehicles and 1,500,000 passengers.

The locations

Arizona

Arizona is the 48th state of America, located in the south-west of the USA and is also known as The Grand Canyon State. It has a population of 3,677,985 and a land area of 113,510 square miles. It is a land-locked state which has borders with Utah, New Mexico, Mexico, California and Nevada.

It is here that the “magnificent seven” in *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet* end up on their latest adventure as their endeavours to make a fortune lead them to a meeting with a tribe of native American Indians.

Arizona has the largest Native American population in the United States and more land devoted to the Indian reservations than any other state. The Navajo Indian Reservation in north-eastern Arizona sprawls across more than 25,000 square miles, roughly the size of West Virginia, and is occupied by about 250,000 residents.

The exact location used in the series is Marble Canyon, which is the northernmost section of the Grand Canyon. Officially, Lees Ferry marks the beginning of the Grand Canyon, as the land slopes gently down to the west side of the river, but, a short distance downstream, there are cliffs at both sides which become steadily higher as the Colorado flows south. This initial section

is known as Marble Canyon because of its very colourful rocks. At this point, you can cross over the Colorado River and stop at the Navajo Bridge to look at the magnificent views below.

This contrasts with the end of the Colorado River’s journey, where, after winding its way 280 miles downstream, it flows quietly into Lake Mead, bringing with it a sense of awe and wonder.

The Grand Canyon is 277 miles long, from Lees Ferry to Grand Wash Cliffs at Lake Mead. It averages 10 miles wide and is 18 miles across at its widest and five miles across at its narrowest. From the North Rim you can look down for more than a mile at its deepest point.

The Grand Canyon displays about one-third of our planet’s history, up to two billion years. However the Colorado River has taken only five to six million years to carve the deep, winding corridor through the many layers of multi-coloured earth and rock.

Arizona’s desert offers a landscape unlike any other, with bright flowers, towering green cacti and thick trees. The Sonoran Desert is the world’s greenest, with grasses, shrubs, trees and towering saguaro cactus that grow only in the desert.

Facts and figures about Arizona

- The original London Bridge was shipped stone-by-stone and reconstructed in Lake Havasu City. In 1968, the bridge was sold for \$2,400,000 to Robert McCulloch, who built \$30 billion worth of real estate around it. It is now one of big holiday sites in Arizona.
- Phoenix is the capital of Arizona and is the nation’s sixth largest city in terms population. It covers more than 450 square miles in land area; London covers a mere 25 square miles.
- Arizona is the home of the Grand Canyon National Park. The Grand Canyon encompasses 1,904 square miles and is one of the seven wonders of the world. It is home to 1,500 different plant species, 305 bird species, 88 mammal species and 58 species of reptiles.
- Grand Canyon’s Marble Canyon got its name from its thousand-foot-thick seam of marble and for its walls eroded to a polished glass finish.
- Arizona became the 48th state of America on 14 February 1912.
- The colours blue and gold are the official state colours.
- The saguaro cactus blossom is the official state flower. The white flower blooms on the tips of the saguaro cactus during May and June. The saguaro is the largest American cactus.
- The Arizona tree frog is the state’s official amphibian.