

## James Bolam and Michael French return in a new series of *Born And Bred* on BBC One



James Bolam and Michael French return as Ormston's father and son doctors in a new series of the hit BBC One drama, *Born And Bred*.

Arthur Gilder (James Bolam) is enjoying having his family around him, especially now that he has moved in with his son, Tom (Michael French), Tom's wife, Deborah (Jenna Russell), and their four children. It's all part of making Arthur feel like he is one of the family and needed but, of course, Arthur just can't resist sticking his oar in from time to time!

Tom and Deborah's eldest child, Helen (Charlotte Salt), is still in love with Eddie (Sam Hudson), the village mechanic, but Eddie has more pressing family issues to deal with. And their other children – Michael (Ross Little), Catherine (Polly Thompson) and baby Philip – are still as much of a handful as ever.

For the Gilders, life seems to be on the up. They now have NHS approval for their surgery and the cottage hospital and live in a beautiful and tranquil Lancashire village surrounded by friends and family.

All the other favourite Ormston residents are back: Linda (Tracey Childs) is the nurse who's married to the village policeman, Len Cosgrove (Peter Gunn). Clive Swift is the vicar, an unconventional man of the cloth, who likes a tippie in *The Signalman's*

Arms where Phyllis (Maggie Steed) is the bold and brassy landlady. Donald Gee is Mr Boynton, the village shopkeeper. Then there's Wilf (John Henshaw), the station-master, who still has a knack for winding up his daughter Jean (Naomi Radcliffe), the rag-and-bone girl.

Jane Tranter, BBC Controller of Drama Commissioning, said: "*Born And Bred* performed extremely well on Sunday nights on BBC One. It was a big hit with viewers, establishing itself very quickly as a firm favourite, in spite of tough competition from ITV. It is what family drama on BBC One is all about and I'm delighted that we are reuniting the same team for the second series, together with such a beautiful location."

The series also features guest stars David Troughton (*Paradise Heights*, *Madame Bovary*), Denise Welch (*Coronation Street*), who returns as Edie McClure, Gwen Taylor (*Barbara*) and Frances de la Tour (*Rising Damp*).

*Born And Bred* is co-created by Chris Chibnall and Nigel McCery, written by Chris Chibnall and produced by Chris Clough. The directors are Ian Knox, Rob Evans, David Innes Edwards and Dominic Brigstocke and the executive producers are Simon Lewis and Susan Hogg.

## Production notes

Set in a picturesque village in the heart of the Ribble Valley in Lancashire, *Born And Bred* encapsulates everything that is typical about Lancashire life in the Fifties. For the villagers of Ormston there's a real feeling of common aspirations: they aren't afraid to work hard, always pulling together when times are hard, but they can share a joke when things are on the up. Everybody knows their neighbours in Ormston and there's never a dull moment.

Producer Chris Clough explains: "I think the Fifties were seen as a safer, friendlier era. But what we've done with *Born And Bred* is to lose some of the traditional aspects of Fifties life, such as the flat cap and Woodbine cigarettes, in favour of a nod to modernity. I think the strengths of *Born And Bred* are its warmth, good humour, the sense of community and, of course, an idyllic setting."

Writer and co-creator Chris Chibnall agrees: "I wanted to create something that you could sit and watch with your whole family, whatever their age. *Born And Bred* is pure escapism, and where we film is one of the most beautiful places in the country."

Although the storyline of *Born And Bred* revolves around the father and son doctor partnership of Arthur and Tom Gilder, played by James Bolam and Michael French, in this series viewers learn much more about the lives and stories of the other characters who live and work in Ormston.

"It's the characters who provide the basis for the storylines," explains Clough. "By using our doctors we are able to enter the lives of the Ormston villagers and share with them the highs and lows, the good times and the bad. This provides a unique mix of humour and drama."

Linda (Tracey Childs) and Len (Peter Gunn) are enjoying married life and are desperate to have a baby, but things don't go smoothly for them.

Clive Swift is the maverick vicar, Rev Brewer, who jumps at every available gambling opportunity, but is skating on thin ice with the Bishop. Phyllis (Maggie Steed) is the landlady at The Signalman's Arms and the eyes and ears of the village. She plays her cards very close to her chest but reveals her more sensitive side when she meets Fred Mills, Eddie's uncle. Helen (Charlotte Salt) is still in love with Eddie (Sam Hudson) but will Eddie ever notice Jean (Naomi Radcliffe)?

Meanwhile, rag-and-bone girl Jean has decided to do more with her life than simply lust after Eddie, so she opts for a new career as a dray woman. Her father, Wilf (John Henshaw), still has a knack for winding the villagers up, particularly when he tries to charge them a toll to re-enter the village – but he gets a shock when his past comes back to haunt him. And Donald Gee is Mr Boynton, the village shopkeeper at the heart of all the village gossip.

"In this series we have much more scope to tell the audience more about the background of the characters," explains Chibnall. "We meet Eddie's Uncle Fred (David Troughton) and Deborah's mother, Dora (Gwen Taylor), arrives in the village. We learn a little more about Mr Boynton, the shopkeeper, and what he enjoys in his spare time, looking after his beloved pigeons!"

"We've got this fantastically talented ensemble cast," enthuses Clough. "All the characters have back-stories and this time we have the space to explore their lives and fill in the gaps."

The Fifties were a time of much change, with the teenage generation emerging for the first time and social changes such as the introduction of the National Health Service. In Ormston, changes are happening slowly. With the surgery and cottage hospital now having NHS approval, Arthur and Tom can run the hospital for the sake of the local people rather than as a profit-making service.

Tom has clear ideas about future plans, which inevitably don't always agree with those of his father, Arthur.

It was also a time when women were gaining a stronger sense of independence. "I think we wanted to spend more time with the female characters this time," says Chibnall. "We wanted to show that there were just the stirrings of ambition in women. I think women were gradually becoming more independent – the feminist movement of the Sixties didn't just spring out of nowhere."

Clough adds: "Coming out of the Second World War, where women had to do a lot of the manual jobs, they are now realising that they can do much more than that. We see this through Jean, in particular, who can see what other women like Linda and Phyllis are doing with their lives, and there's this sense of eternal frustration that she is just the local scrap-girl. I think the Fifties saw the emergence of women and it's the Gilder children that would see the future benefit of this."

## James Bolam and Michael French are Drs Arthur and Tom Gilder



### James Bolam

James was born and grew up in Sunderland and he studied at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London. He is married to actress Susan Jameson and they have starred together in several productions, including *When The Boat Comes In*. James is best known for playing lovable rogue Terry in *The Likely Lads*, Jack Ford in *When The Boat Comes In* and Trevor in *The Beiderbecke Affair*. More recently James has appeared in *New Tricks* on BBC One.

### Arthur Gilder

Arthur has been running the surgery for years but, recently widowed, he missed having his family around him and is delighted that they have now returned to Ormston. Arthur and his son, Tom, now work together. When he's not working he enjoys a tippie with the other villagers in *The Signalman's Arms*. Arthur is as stubborn as his son and is afraid of change.

### Michael French

Michael comes from Epping in Essex and he studied at the Mountview Theatre School in North London. He is best known for his roles as David Wicks in *EastEnders* and Nick Jordan in *Holby City*.

### Tom Gilder

Tom is married to Deborah (Jenna Russell) and in the first series they moved from Manchester, with their four children, so that Tom could take on the running of the surgery with his father. Tom's best friend is Len (Peter Gunn), who recently married Tom's childhood sweetheart, Linda. Tom is forward-thinking, stubborn and a family man at heart.

When Tom Gilder gave up his job in Manchester to move back to the village in Lancashire where he grew up, he couldn't have envisaged what a dramatic change that would have on his life.

He's persuaded his wife Deborah and their children to move to Ormston, so that he can fulfil his dream to work alongside his father, Arthur (James Bolam), in the village surgery. He's keen to impress his father, but being in partnership causes a fair amount of problems and, as if working together wasn't bad enough, Arthur has now also moved in with his son and can't resist interfering.

"What Arthur wants above everything else is to have his family back in the village," says James Bolam. "He wants his son to come into the practice with him but, at the same time, he doesn't want to stop working."

Relationships between father and son are never the easiest at the best of times, as writer Chris Chibnall explains. "Any father and son working together is going to be a hotbed of conflict and disagreement, and that's true throughout *Born And Bred*. As the series progresses, Tom really starts to wonder whether he can actually work with his father."

Michael French agrees: "That kind of working partnership can change a relationship, and I think Tom has 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."

Tom tries very hard not to make the same mistakes that he feels his father made and it's a constant battle to find the balance between being a good father and a good doctor. "When he was growing up, Tom always felt that his father favoured his brother Jack. Tom is desperate to please him," adds French.

The two characters couldn't be more different: Arthur is very old-fashioned and Tom is the modernising influence. Michael French describes Tom as "a doer, not a dreamer – he feels he can really make a difference in the village and it is through the NHS that he can really help."

Arthur, however, says James Bolam, is "very good at what he does, but he is steeped in village traditions and old-fashioned ways and is wary of change.

Deep down he knows there's 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 do it another way takes enormous strength. Arthur can be very firm at times but at other times he can be jolly and jokey and have fun with the villagers."

Playing a doctor was clearly something that Michael French relished. "I do like playing doctors as it brings out the more compassionate side of my nature. I like to listen, I like to understand and I like to help people. And it's also great to be able to play a married man in an era where there are such strong values."

Despite their differences, both Arthur and Tom are popular characters in the village of Ormston. "Arthur knows all the villagers really well," says Bolam. "I should think that, if he didn't bring certain local villagers into the world, then he's definitely treated them all at some time or another."