POLDARK

AN ADAPTATION OF THE FIRST TWO NOVELS IN WINSTON GRAHAM’S POLDARK SERIES

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For further information please contact:
Lisa Vanoli 07899 060230
lisavanolipublicity@gmail.com

Picture publicity:
Alex Gill
aagill@mac.com
Aidan Turner (The Hobbit Trilogy, Being Human, Desperate Romantics) and Eleanor Tomlinson (Death Comes to Pemberley, The White Queen, Jack The Giant Slayer) star as Ross Poldark and Demelza in Debbie Horsfield’s adaptation of Winston Graham’s acclaimed sweeping saga set in 18th century Cornwall.

Britain is in the grip of a turbulent crisis... falling wages, rising prices, civil unrest - only the bankers are smiling. It's 1783 and Ross Poldark returns from the American War of Independence to his beloved Cornwall to find his world in ruins.

This is an eight-part adaptation of the first two novels in Winston Graham's Poldark series. Also starring are Heida Reed (Silent Witness) as Ross' first love Elizabeth, Jack Farthing (The Riot Club) as ambitious banker George Warleggan, Kyle Soller (The Hollow Crown) as Ross' cousin Francis Poldark, Ruby Bentall (The Paradise) as Ross' cousin Verity, Warren Clarke (Red Riding) as Ross' uncle Charles Poldark, Phil Davis (Whitechapel) as Ross' lazy manservant Jud and Beatie Edney (Poirot) as Jud's wife Prudie, Alexander Arnold (Skins) as Ross' farm hand Jim Carter, Robert Daws (Holby) as Dr Choake and Richard Harrington (Hinterland) as Captain Andrew Blamey.

Winston Graham wrote 12 Poldark novels starting with Ross Poldark in 1945 and ending with Bella Poldark in 2002. The internationally bestselling novels are set in Cornwall where Graham spent much of his life.

Robin Ellis, who played Ross in the first television adaptation of the Poldark novels in the 1970s, will be joining the cast for two episodes to play Reverend Halse.

Writer Debbie Horsfield explains: "Ross Poldark is one of literature's great heroes: a gentleman who is also a rebel, who has a keen sense of morality and social justice but without any priggishness or moralising. He's also a great romantic figure - caught between two women from two completely different backgrounds. A gentleman who marries his kitchen maid. A man who doesn't stand on ceremony, who doesn't play by the rules and often falls foul of authority. He has elements of Darcy, Heathcliffe, Rochester, Rhett Butler and Robin Hood - quite a combination!"

Executive producer Karen Thrussell says: "Cornwall is a massive part of the book and our adaptation. Nowhere else looks like it: the huge skies, four seasons in one day climate, the quality of light, it's rugged beauty scarred with mines, the powerful surging sea and the wind beaten moors. The elemental passion of the landscape and changeable nature of the place has echoes of Ross Poldark's personality."

Thrussell’s lifelong love of the novels was one of the key factors behind this new adaptation and lead to the Winston Estate entrusting her and Mammoth Screen to bring the story of Ross Poldark to a new generation.
She continues: "Debbie Horsfield is one of our most acclaimed screenwriters, renowned for her original and contemporary series – including Making Out, The Riff Raff Element and Cutting It. She had never written an adaptation before, and had only strayed from contemporary life with Sex, Chips & Rock 'n' Roll. But we had a hunch that she would respond to this epic story of love and family. It was with some trepidation that we sent her the books, but she loved them.'

Horsfield says: "I'd never read the Poldark novels before so had no idea what masterly narratives they were and how exquisitely detailed and engaging the characters were - but it was no surprise to me to learn that the books have never been out of print. People who haven't read them are in for a treat.

"I was aware of, but didn't watch, the first adaptation in the 1970s. Since what we're doing is a new adaptation of a classic novel, rather than a re-make of a TV series, I opted not to watch the 1970s version on DVD until I'd written over half the series. It was interesting to see how much our version, based directly on the novels, differs from the 70s adaptation - although of course certain key elements appear in both.

"Very early on in the development of the series Robin Ellis got in touch to offer his good wishes for our success. I've always been a huge admirer of his work, both in TV and theatre, so the idea of finding a role for him was something we were really keen to do. He has a key role in two episodes - and needless to say he's absolutely brilliant!"

Says Robin Ellis: "Playing Ross Poldark was a very significant part of my life; it has had only a positive effect on my life and was an absolute joy. So I was thrilled at the idea of coming back to play a small part in this. Reverend Halse is a nasty piece of work, part of the establishment, and one of the gentry that Ross despises. It was a totally new experience to play this sort of character and one I relished."

Adds Thrussell: "Andrew Graham represents his father’s literary estate, and he acted as a consultant to us at every stage of the process. He knows the novels inside out, and the characters of Ross, Demelza etc are still very vivid to him. He was able to tell us about his father's inspirations for the characters, and give an insider's insight into Winston Grahams Cornwall. He had an encyclopaedic knowledge of the original novels and was a great supporter of Debbie's scripts. He was a mine of information and insight."

Sadly this was also the final television role for Warren Clarke, paying tribute to the legendary actor Debbie Horsfield says: " One of my long-term ambitions had been to work with Warren Clarke - a wonderful actor (and fellow-Mancunian) I feel immensely privileged that Warren's final TV appearance was as the patriarch Charles Poldark - a character who (like Warren) dominates the screen, makes you laugh out loud and breaks your heart."

Based on the novels by Winston Graham, Poldark is an eight part series written and created for television by Debbie Horsfield (Cutting It), produced by Eliza Mellor (Death Comes to Pemberley) and directed by Ed Bazalgette (A Mother's Son) and William McGregor (Misfits). The executive producers are Debbie Horsfield, Karen Thrussell and Damien Timmer for Mammoth Screen, Polly Hill for the BBC and Rebecca Eaton for MASTERPIECE.
ROSS POLDARK (Aidan Turner)
A man of contradictions, Ross has a strong sense of social justice but a contempt for authority. Reckless yet full of integrity. Charismatic but down-to-earth. Volatile yet fiercely loyal. Torn between two women and two social classes. A hero to most, a scourge to many.

DEMELZA CARNE (Eleanor Tomlinson)
The only daughter of an impoverished, brutal and alcoholic miner, Demelza is rescued from a life of violence by Ross who employs her as his kitchen maid. Outspoken and fiercely independent, her lively mind makes her thirst for knowledge. Her blossoming beauty goes unnoticed by Ross – at first!

GEORGE WARLEGGAN (Jack Farthing)
From humble beginnings as blacksmiths, the Warleggans have strived to become one of the wealthiest and most powerful families in Cornwall. George is an ambitious young banker who will stop at nothing to make a profit, even if it means seeing his closest friends financially ruined.

ELIZABETH POLDARK née CHYNOWETH (Heida Reed)
Elizabeth once promised herself to Ross, but after three years and rumours of his death, she agreed to marry Francis. When Ross returns, she is deeply tormented by long buried feelings. Desperate to remain true to Francis, Elizabeth can’t help but feel she may be marrying the wrong Poldark...

FRANCIS POLDARK (Kyle Soller)
Born into wealth, Francis stands to inherit the greater Poldark estate. However, he is not as capable as his father or his cousin and struggles to take over the running of Grambler mine. Keenly aware of his inferiority to Ross – his wife’s true love – he turns to gambling and drink.

VERITY POLDARK (Ruby Bentall)
Verity has been a dutiful daughter, but Ross’ return finally allows her an opportunity to venture into society. At a dance she falls in love with Captain Andrew Blamey, whose dark past does not meet her family’s approval. Verity seems destined to live life as a lonely spinster.

CHARLES POLDARK (Warren Clarke)
An imposing man whose presence fills any room, Charles is the elder statesman of the Poldark family. He longs for his son Francis to be more like his nephew Ross, but privately concedes that Francis lacks the gumption and aptitude to take over the family business.

DWIGHT ENYS (Luke Norris)
Dwight is a young, dedicated and handsome doctor who remains naive with women. He is passionate about the neglect many of his patients suffer and he is filled with new scientific ideas that challenge the quackery of established medical men.
CAPTAIN ANDREW BLAMEY (Richard Harrington)
A successful sea captain known for his volatile temper, which tragically resulted in the accidental death of his wife and unborn child. Now a reformed alcoholic, he worships Verity, but faces stern opposition from Charles and Francis who consider him likely to drag the Poldark name through the mud.

AUNT AGATHA (Caroline Blakiston)
The matriarch of the Poldark family, Aunt Agatha may be in her nineties with little of her hearing and none of her teeth left, but she is as shrewd and outspoken as she ever was.

JUD (Phil Davis) and PRUDIE PAYNTER (Beatie Edney)
Jud and Prudie were Ross’ father’s servants and friends, but they are drunken, lazy and not averse to stealing from their master’s drinks cabinet. Ross keeps them on in recognition of their relationship with his late father, but it is a struggle to get them to pull their weight.

ZACKY MARTIN (Tristan Sturrock)
Zacky is one of few in the mining community who can read and is well respected amongst his peers. He is older than Ross, but they are old friends and he is proud to be able to work at Wheal Leisure where he gains a trusted position.

JIM CARTER, MARK DANIEL, PAUL DANIEL (Alexander Arnold, Matthew Wilson and Ed Browning)
Ross’ friends from before the war, they would often get into scrapes together, mostly a bit of smuggling. Ross believes that they will always see him as gentry – a landlord to doff their caps to – but they are actually loyal and devoted friends.

CAPTAIN HENSHAWE (John Hollingworth)
Henshawe is a well-respected mine captain who has worked his way up through the ranks. A calm and pragmatic man, he worked for Ross’ father at Wheal Leisure and confidently backs Ross in his gambit to re-open her.

HARRIS PASCOE (Richard Hope)
Pascoe is a kindly banker who has a long history with Ross and his father. His bank is much smaller than Warleggans, but he works hard in his clients’ best interests and would be loathe to let any of them fall into bankruptcy, especially Ross, who he considers a good friend.

Dr CHOAKE (Robert Daws)
The snobbish local doctor who considers himself above the lower classes that cannot pay him enough for his services. He focuses on working for the wealthy and is a firm advocate of leeches and bleeding and does not approve of Dwight Enys’ modern methods. He is also a stakeholder in Wheal Leisure.

CARY WARLEGGAN (Pip Torrens)
George’s uncle and the devil on his shoulder, he presses George to make increasingly callous business decisions. Cary maintains a coarse edge that betrays his working class upbringing and can be an acute embarrassment to George.
Aidan Turner is Ross Poldark

Aidan Turner was amazed by the breadth of the role of Ross Poldark in the new adaptation of Winston Graham's novels.

"It's fantastic as an actor to have the chance to play such a wide range in one series. Every step of the way there is something new. When I first read Debbie Horsfield's script I knew there was a huge scope there with Ross."

Aidan recalls: "I had never heard of Poldark but when I told my parents I was going to play Ross they nearly had a fit! The previous 1970s series was popular in Ireland, I guess because people could relate to it - the farming, the scenery, the horses...it is continually surprising meeting people who are so excited to hear we are making a new adaptation.

"Debbie's scripts are brilliant and she creates such a vivid and coherent Cornish world, just as Winston Graham does. The dynamic between the characters is ever changing which feels very exciting for an actor – all the different roles are so very distinctive; each of us has a different energy and agenda going on."

So what kind of a man is Ross Poldark?

"When we first meet Ross he is in turmoil. He went away to war a young, cocky, confident character with a carefree attitude, who was running away from a lot of things. In America he was faced with death on a daily basis and then when he returns to England he doesn't really know who he is anymore.

"When he arrives back in Cornwall everything's changed for him: his father has died, his land is barren, the local tin mines are going through a hard time and laying off workers, leaving the region on its knees, and he's lost Elizabeth, his childhood sweetheart who he expected to marry on his return.

"Ross knows he needs to pick himself up and try and find who he is and where he lies in this new world. He’s strong – that’s what I love about him – he’s someone who can get on with things; he doesn’t wallow in self-pity or despair. He sees a situation for what it is and drags himself through it. He admires hard working people and treats people with respect if they earn it - no matter what their position in life. He is an original class warrior!"

So what changes do we see in Ross throughout the series?

"Ross is 23 when he comes home and you can see changes quite fast. When he realises that Elizabeth is out of the picture, he changes his frame of mind and concentrates more on getting his land back together, looking after his tenants, and resolves to revive the ruined mine on his estate."

And soon after Ross meets a woman who will change the course of his life, an urchin who he first takes to be a young boy. She is Demelza Carne.
“Taking on Demelza as his kitchen maid and understanding how that whole relationship develops is a huge moment for Ross. He doesn’t care what people think, but he’s taken a huge punt bringing her into the house and having her as a kitchen maid. Eventually he takes charge, doesn’t quite know what he’s got himself in for but very quickly he realises he’s got to do something about it. Ross just grabs everything by the horns and runs with it!

"He is continually facing something new; his changing relationship with his cousin Francis, his Uncle Charles who he has looked up to all his life and who is a rock for him, even though he might not admit it, the feud with George Warleggan."

Did Aidan delve into the history of the time in Cornwall?

"You can always learn more about what is going on at the time, whether it is pertinent to the story or not. The research is the fun part that helps you play the character–to polish up on historical facts and understand what it was like living there at the time. Life was a lot harder, you have no idea until you start researching and see how difficult things were. Even small chores like washing clothes and getting fresh water was so hard.

"The differences between Cornwall and London, the population, what people were living on, what the industries were. Even little things like travel time – nowadays London to Cornwall isn’t a big feat but in those days it would take you over a week to travel there so people just didn’t do it. It was a Duchy, like its own country with its own legislation. I didn’t know much about Cornwall at all before, I had never been, hadn’t heard much about it so to find out so much about it was great."

And Aidan relished his time filming in Cornwall.

"It was simply stunning, we had the best weather there over the Summer. We filmed at so many gorgeous locations but the weather really made it work. People know Poldark so well down there and are proud of it so we were welcomed all the time. It was surprising getting fans turning up to set and people travel to show their support and see what was going on. It reminded me of home in Ireland, and it was great to be able to film there so much."

So what were the hardest scenes for Aidan to film?

"Even if you thought something was scary, the great thing about playing Ross is that you can never chicken out of doing anything!

"I was going to the gym a lot the first couple of months as I had a couple of topless scenes. One of the things I did find out is that they didn’t actually wear underwear at the time so it made it quite difficult to shoot some of the stuff we did. They would just wear the shirt and then tuck it in and around."

And the highlight for Aidan?
"Has to be Seamus the horse. You can’t do bad acting on a horse, you look too cool. There’s an energy when you deliver dialogue on a horse, its empowering especially for Ross, he thrives on these kinds of situations, so anytime I could get on the horse I would do it.

"Seamus is quite skittish, but he’s a real actor’s horse as you can rehearse something once and he knows where he’s at, the direction he’s going in, when he has to stop and reset. We had to change words as he would just set off when we shouted ‘Action’. He was so sharp and was always moving and on the go. Him and Ross are well suited!

"Luckily I did a lot of riding in New Zealand when we were there filming The Hobbit. I trained a lot and thought I’d leave a pretty good rider - thank god I did as there was a lot of riding in Poldark. It’s very much a part of who Ross is so it’s immediately getting you into character."

And while Aidan wasn’t allowed to do all his own riding stunts, he did do as much as possible.

"They wouldn’t let me gallop along the cliff top, for obvious reasons, but I did as much as possible. There were some great moment when Eleanor (Tomlinson - Demelza) and I ride double together on Seamus. It can be tricky, it all depends who is on the back as it’s always a rocky ride for them! Eleanor was great because she’s such a good rider herself. She’s confident so if the horse did anything strange she wouldn't freak out. There’s something really romantic about it and it’s a lovely image to watch. We’d always whisper stuff and crack each other up which was fun.

"Eleanor and I work very well together. I don’t think you can create that chemistry – you either have it or you don’t. It was just right from the very beginning, and even off screen that energy was still there. We had the same respect for each other as the characters did. Sometimes you just click; that’s the joy of good casting. We knew we had something quite special together and didn’t need to work on that, we just trusted Debbie’s writing. We could read each other, and guide each other through a scene and we never panicked."

But did Aidan feel any pressure tackling such a beloved role?

"Not really. I don’t want to let people down, especially fans of the character, but I don’t think it’s productive to think about how you can disappoint people. We took our inspiration from the original novels by Winston Graham and Debbie Horsfield’s scripts.

"The fan base of the 1970s adaptation of Poldark is very supportive, they have been very generous and kind and genuinely excited to see what we have done with this. It’s like breathing new life into it. But we need to remember that a lot of people haven’t seen the previous adaptation as it was 40 years ago, and there’s a lot of people that won’t have heard of it either!

"Having scenes with Robin Ellis, who played Ross in the seventies series, was brilliant. He is such a lovely guy and still receives fan mail! You can only imagine what it was like – that show was just absolutely huge."
For Eleanor Tomlinson playing Demelza in Winston Graham's *Poldark* is the Scarlett O'Hara of roles.

"For me Demelza was the character who really stood out as having the most incredible journey in Debbie Horsfield's script," says Eleanor.

"For a start she’s completely different from anything I’ve played before. She also has the most fantastic journey; she starts out as an urchin being mistaken for a boy, then becomes Ross’ servant and gradually moves up to become head maid and the best worker that he has and then eventually his wife. The journey for her in only eight episodes is just extraordinary and roles like this just don’t come around that often."

And Eleanor was prepared to do whatever she could to get the role.

"I was looking for that next really challenging role and wanted to break away from my usual roles in period dramas, the well-educated ones. So I spoke with the casting director and asked to be seen for the part.

"I wanted to really show the director and producers that I could transform myself for this vastly different role. I borrowed by brother’s clothes and went into the audition and tried to just stay in character as much as possible as they’ve never seen that side of me. I’ve never really done it that way before, as when you go in to play the leading lady roles, or the roles like Elizabeth, you’re much more talkative and polite, you dress nicely but with Demelza I think that was the whole point to have that rougher edge."

So what attracted Eleanor to this urchin?

"She is extremely resilient and has this streetwise edge to her but she never becomes too hard. She has to be vastly different to Elizabeth but you still have to love her, so for me that was really interesting to play. Also not giving away what happens, or creating that relationship too quickly, you have to let her flower and evolve. There’s a vulnerability in the character which I really liked. Female roles as strong as this don’t come around very often."

And how did she feel taking on such a well loved role?

"When I found out they were making the project I spoke to my parents about it over dinner and they were like 'Oh my God, *Poldark*, that’s amazing,' and it wasn’t until then did I realise how successful the previous adaptation had been. I then read the first two books that our series covers, looked further into it and watched little bits of the old series. I deliberately didn’t watch the whole series as I wanted to do my own thing with the character. But I was fascinated at how Angharad Rees managed to capture the public’s heart the way she did as she was so popular."

One of the hardest elements of the role for Eleanor was the Cornish accent...
"It was very hard, and being from East Yorkshire I had never really ventured to Cornwall as a kid so that was a continual experience for me as well. I worked very hard with the voice coach who was fantastic and so helpful. With Demelza’s accent, she never loses it but she tames it a little bit – I was anxious that she never totally becomes a lady, she is never like Elizabeth and I wanted to keep that trueness to her roots.

"The accent is hard to master and the Cornish people are so passionate about Poldark, they’re going to be listening for the accent and want it to be perfect.

"I learnt about how their jaws were a lot tighter because of the wind, and living so close to the sea, the salt makes you speak in a different way. They clench their jaw tightly so you get a completely different sound. One of the main things I found hard was that the language is like Old English, they use words we haven’t even heard nowadays."

And do the costumes and make up help the transition along Demelza's journey?

"Marianne (Agertoft) the costume designer was fantastic. She is so open to involving the actors on creating that journey, and especially with Demelza who has a massive journey with her clothes – she goes from being a rag-wearing urchin to being Mistress Poldark. It was fantastic to work with Marianne and come up with this look because I particularly wanted Demelza to look practical. Gradually we move on but she still wears the same dress a lot; it’s not that she’s suddenly come to the Nampara and immediately becomes a lady, her transition into a lady is much slower. The costumes were immensely helpful, and the same with make-up; we gradually change her look and make her hair more classic, and as she got grander she wore it down and free."

So will audiences be drawn into the relationship between Ross and Demelza?

"I think they’re very similar personalities and along the way she will make Ross notice that his relationship with Elizabeth would never have worked as they are not alike. Whereas Ross and Demelza are cut from the same rock; Demelza is equally as fiery as Ross and puts him in his place but at the same time they just understand each other’s moods. It was a really fun dynamic to play with.

"Aidan is a brilliant actor and think he’s done an amazing thing with the character. He was under a lot of pressure, as were we all playing such iconic characters, so that is quite intense but he is a very clever actor and it was nice to work alongside him."

And what does the Cornish landscape bring to the story?

"I had the greatest time in Cornwall – it is so beautiful, I almost can’t believe I’d never been there before. So much of the piece came alive when we were filming in Cornwall and everyone found their character in the outdoors, particularly with Demelza as she is very connected to the landscape.

"I also love the countryside and just enjoyed exploring all the different coves and beaches and the endless beautiful blue water, it was so gorgeous. It is such a peaceful and relaxing place."
Heida Reed is Elizabeth

Growing up in Iceland, Heida wasn’t aware of Poldark but instantly loved the wide open spaces of Cornwall where they filmed much of the drama.

"I felt like when we were down in Cornwall the whole story came together in my head. The landscape is so vital in the storytelling and when we were there it all fitted together. That Cornish vista is such a part of the story and people’s inner lives and it is an incredible place."

Heida believes her character, Elizabeth, is a victim of her own moral code.

"Elizabeth is fundamentally a nice, genuinely warm person and Debbie (Horsfield) has done an amazing job at bringing her alive and making my job so easy!

"I think she is very much a lady of her time, trapped in her own world. It is important for Elizabeth to know her place in society and be respected by those around her. She could follow her heart more but she feels morally she must do the right thing even if she suffers for it. Elizabeth never voices regret but I think her predicament will strike a chord with people today.

"It was an awful miscommunication and Elizabeth is the type of person who will do the right thing and stick with her decisions because that is what she thinks a good person does - and that still stands in modern society.

"But of course you don't just turn your feelings off and that is where Demelza comes into it. That is also where I fell in love with Elizabeth and realised what a generous person she is because she takes Demelza into her home and welcomes her into society more than most others."

Heida jokes that she was the most high maintenance actor in Poldark - for the costume department!

"I was definitely more time consuming then even Aidan Turner as Ross Poldark," she laughs. "I was never done with fittings, the costume department were meticulous and a lot of my fabrics had to be dyed again and again, taken up or down a shade, so they matched my skin tone.

"Over the four years that the series spans, Elizabeth goes through phases and becomes more natural as time moves on as she doesn't have the time and probably doesn't care as much."

What was the hardest part of filming Poldark for Heida?

"I had never ridden a horse before so went to the horse master for lessons before we started filming. I learnt to ride side saddle which was definitely the most challenging and exciting thing I had to do."
"Every time I sat on a horse I used to think he would throw me off and I would die! It was exhilarating and I felt so proud of myself for getting through it. I actually enjoyed riding side saddle - I found it more comfortable than sitting astride."
Kyle Soller is Francis Poldark

Kyle Soller was attracted to the role of Francis Poldark by the stark journey the character takes involving gambling, drinking, adultery and duelling!

"Francis has the starkest journey of all the characters in this series which was really attractive to me. I think he’s perhaps more flawed than most but he has this huge self-confidence issue and is constantly living in the shadow of his cousin Ross," explains Kyle.

"He has this over-bearing father who he can never please and he feels he doesn't have a place in life. He doesn’t want to go into mining as he’s not up to handling the business side, he can’t be the brave swashbuckling hero, his best quality is his kindness, generosity and his love for Elizabeth.

"When Ross comes back, that just gets completely thrown out of kilter and this really interesting love triangle develops and that kick starts his decline. Playing this man who at the beginning is quite young and fresh faced, then gradually begins to decline into an alcoholic and gambler, who ruins the relationships around him in this cry for help."

In spite of this Kyle had some hair raising action sequences to film.

"Francis really gets himself into some sticky situations that would be a big test for anyone. The scene in the mineshaft was really scary on an acting level because this is when Frances and Ross are fighting it out over Elizabeth, right after Ross has come back from America. Being down in the mineshaft with open water, in a situation where someone is really angry at you and wanting to punch you in the face, it was scary.

"The duel, with a man threatening to take his sister away, was so much fun as well as we got to use the actual pistols they would have used at the time – there was a really amazing technical team that helped us out."

Family honour is hugely important to Francis Poldark...

"Some people see Francis as a weak character, but I think he has so many strong qualities and one of them is his family honour. When the family status is at stake, he reacts extremely irrationally, almost like a child and that's another one of his downfalls; he can be extremely brash and impetuous. But the seed of that emotion and reaction is correct – he always wants the best for everyone, especially for his sister – they have an extremely complex relationship and it is not always a very positive one so when it comes to her future, there’s no way he’s going to let someone whisk her away. Francis is always trying to find his place in public, so if he can make a big deal about his sister being slighted, or his family reputation being dragged through the mud then he can appear like a bigger man."

And Kyle appreciated the Cornwall affect on the cast and crew while filming.

"To film out at The Botallack mines and cliffs where these people actually mined was really special. It's other worldly but pristine and wild. You get a real feeling for the landscape the
people were living in at the time; harsh but gorgeous. Filming all over Cornwall really helped influence how these characters behaved."
Ruby Bentall believes her character Verity is the most straightforward and good natured member of the Poldark family.

"She’s got a massive heart and is a very kind and caring. She gets treated quite poorly by her family who don’t seem to recognise what a great person she is and take advantage of her kindness. But she does also have great strength at times," explains Ruby.

"When Ross arrives home unexpectedly from the war she hasn’t got any other thought in her head apart from ‘He’s alive!’ While everyone else around the table is thinking about how his return will complicate things, Verity’s the only one that just has this pure happiness to see him. They have a better relationship than she has with her brother, Francis, so for her it’s like her brother coming home."

Why are Ross and Verity so close?

"I guess it’s just who Ross is. He decided to treat her more like an equal and she responded to that by thinking he’s the best person to hang out with. He’s on her side, whereas she feels her brother isn’t.

"It could be really hard for women in those times. If you didn't find anyone to marry you would end up a spinster in Verity's case looking after her father for the rest of her life which would be a pretty miserable outcome. Especially in somewhere like Cornwall where there was limited choice and Verity doesn't have the confidence or beauty to sell herself."

And Verity is quick to befriend Demelza and welcome her into the family?

"That’s just her personality – she’s not quick to judge, she’ll let someone talk, she’ll listen and make up her own mind. She’s just a very reasonable person. She loves Ross and wants to see what Demelza’s like and understand why he likes her. Verity is very rational, she’s not quick tempered, and is much cleverer than her dad and her brother in that way, even though she is less educated.

"I really enjoyed the scenes where Verity teaches her about etiquette and how to dance. Once she gets to know Demelza and understands that she needs help, she is there to provide it. It's in her kind nature to do that, she enjoys helping people. In the end it turns out that Demelza helps her as much as she helps Demelza, so they get quite close and have a really nice relationship."

What were the biggest challenges for Ruby filming Poldark?

"I seem to have the pain of corsets in all my roles. You can see why women couldn't do anything in those days because everything was such hard work - walking upstairs, lying down, eating! You look nice but it is so impractical."
"Riding side saddle was really hard as you have no support, you can't grip with your legs as they are just lying there! How women used to go hunting and jumping I don't know - practice I suppose.

"I rode a lot as a kid but have never ridden for a job and there was one point when Aidan and I were on our horses waiting for a shot to be set up, looking over a cliff with the sun shining on the clear water and it was the most beautiful place in the world." And Ruby made the most of her time in Cornwall...

"I went swimming in the sea every day and if I ever had a day off I would go for massive walks along the cliffs in Treglos, or to St Michael's Mount in Penzance. We had such amazing weather."
Jack Farthing is George Warleggan

George Warleggan is a moneyed banker and Ross Poldark's nemesis but don't let that put you off him says Jack Farthing who plays the character.

"George is a layered and elaborate character. Some people would call him a villain but I shy away from that description - what makes him so exciting is that he is like any one of us; full of jealousy and resentment, he motivates himself and has this vast ambition and inability to decide what he wants. It has been very satisfying to get my teeth into the character."

Jack continues: " Ross and George haven’t seen eye to eye since they were at school and it hasn’t been explained why, which is a really interesting as it could be any number of things and we talk through all these different alternatives. When we find them at the beginning of the series, there have been years of simmering resentment and it's grown into something bigger. They absolutely are pitched against each other, Ross is the person that has the ability to make George feel inferior more than anyone else and that is the thing George fights against, it’s his battle. He strives to get the respect he feels he deserves, Ross is the person who cares least about that, and is least afraid to put him in his place."

Yet both maintain a friendship with Franci...  

" Yes, it’s interesting as Frances sits very much between them. The story is that Ross and Francis were best of friends, Ross then went away and George stepped in and they became friends. There’s a bit of political behaviour on George’s part, he uses Francis to get what he wants and what makes it most interesting is George does have this real love and respect for Francis, there’s a definite friendship there and they spend a lot of their time together. Francis benefits from that too to some extent as he has the support George gives him financially. "

For Jack one of the most important elements to the character is his appearance.

"He is absolutely splendid. More than most he cares about the way he looks. He is on show and is a man of fashion and elegance and slightly ahead of his time. His wardrobe is full of expensive clothes he could show off to make sure people know that he is one to watch.

"I feel like it’s very difficult to work out exactly where you are with a character until you work out the costume, even though you don’t want it to feel like a costume you want it to feel like clothes. The costumes played a huge part, and really helped with creating the whole image. You need to be aware that George is putting on a costume and presenting himself to society."

And Jack was fascinated to learn about the society of that era in Cornwall.

"I didn’t know much about that period, which is one of the best things about my job – I get these niches of expertise. Everything was so much harder in 18th Century Cornwall, a lot of people are struggling, apart from George as he’s the one with the money . And George rarely stepped foot outside town so everything was easily accessible.."
Because of this Jack feels he did miss out on some of the joys of the Cornish landscape.

"It’s the expanse of the drama of the landscape that allows the actors to work around this and they all match; the adventure and the romantic coastline. It was interesting to understand just how big the landscape is, and all the factors that played into why people behaved the way they did at the time. As George is a town dweller, I feel I missed out on a lot of Cornwall as many of my scenes were filmed in interiors."
Debbie Horsfield
Writer

How did you become involved with the project?
I was approached by Karen Thrussell and Damien Timmer at Mammoth Screen and asked to consider adapting the first two Poldark novels (Ross Poldark and Demelza). I'd never done an adaptation before - and almost everything else I've written has been contemporary so my initial reaction was to think they'd asked the wrong person! Nevertheless I took the books away on holiday - and had read all of three pages before I was hooked. I came home and said yes without any hesitation.

How do you go about adapting a series of books such as these?
Sounds obvious, but the first task was to read all 12 books in order to get an idea of the journeys of the characters and the overall story arcs. Then the next task was to decide how many books to go for on the first series. Originally the BBC commissioned 6 episodes but I soon realised that this wouldn't be enough to do justice to the complexities of narrative and character so we asked for 8 episodes and the BBC agreed.

Do you feel the weight of expectation? There are so many Poldark fans!
There are! Fans of the books and fans of the 1970s adaptation. My primary concern has always been to do justice to the source material. Winton Graham is a masterly story teller and his characters are wonderful creations. In a way I felt the same weight of expectation as I might have done if I'd adapted a Jane Austen or a Dickens novel - not because of the many other adaptations that might be compared to it but because of wanting to do justice to the original material.

In terms of the 70s series, obviously we all hope the fans will enjoy a new adaptation (in the way Austen or Dickens fans can enjoy new adaptations off well-loved novels). I didn't watch the 70s series but obviously I remember what a massive hit it was. However, what's exciting is that there's a whole generation which has never seen - or in some cases even heard of - the first series - so for them we are starting with a clean slate.

Do you have a way of immersing yourself in the period?
I did a lot of background reading: the history of the period, both British and world history, I read books about mining and industry in Cornwall, about the Methodist movement, about pilchard fishing, the conditions which gave rise to smuggling, etc. I listened to the music of the period, both classical and folk, I talked a lot with our brilliant historical advisor Hannah Greig (Lecturer in History at York University, specialising in 18th century studies). It also helped that my degree is in English Literature so I was very familiar with literature of the period, and also with the vocabulary, idioms, phrases, manners, etiquette, traditions, etc.
Why are these stories so engrossing and addictive?

They are multi-stranded narratives with characters which are so beautifully drawn you feel they could actually walk into the room. The stories themselves are both epic in their sweep and exquisitely detailed in the creation of their world. They are set against a backdrop of great historic, social, economic turbulence - and they deal with compelling themes such as ambition, rivalry, betrayal, family and of course love. When I first read them I was reminded of Margaret Mitchell’s ‘Gone With the Wind’ which is similarly a portrait of a society at a time of great change, with an epic love story at its heart and a series of unforgettable characters.

What additional research did you do? Anyone in particular help you with various elements?

Andrew Graham (the author’s son) has been unfailingly supportive - and very hands on. Every key decision has to be run by him and we have been in constant contact from the script stage onwards. He reads all the scripts and gives feedback. He has said that this adaptation is much closer to his father’s novels than the previous adaptation.

How familiar were you with the Cornish landscape before embarking on this project?

I’d had several holidays in Cornwall and had always loved the wild elemental nature of its landscape and the extreme weather - the landscape and weather play a huge part in the novel and we’ve done our best to capture those extremes. This summer was one of the sunniest for many years and we were very lucky with the weather, Cornwall looks gorgeous. But the first scenes we shot in Cornwall were in March during the storms so we got some spectacular footage of waves.

What are the most important elements to get right?

I obviously want to make sure that what readers love so much about the books - the vividness of the characterisation, the complexity of the storytelling - is translated to the screen. This obviously means getting the casting and the creation of the Poldark ‘world’ right. We think we've assembled an amazing cast who will do justice to Winston Graham’s characters. And we also hope the ‘world’ - (Catrin Mereddyd’s design, Marianne Agertoft’s costumes, Jacqui Fowler’s hair and make-up) also has authenticity as well as beauty and style.
Andrew Graham

Son of *Poldark* author Winston Graham and series consultant on behalf of the Poldark Estate.

**Why did you feel it was time for a new adaptation of *Poldark***?

I think anytime would have been right because the stories have a very enduring quality. It feels like all the key ingredients you need for a big historical drama are there: the love story, the class story, the new money versus old money story, and there’s the addition of the whole Cornish background that gives it a particularly different take. I suppose the other reason why it might be a good idea is that the *Poldark* that was shown in 70’s got these huge audiences, and quite a lot of them would have been people in their teens and twenties, and those people are now in their 50’s and 60’s with their children probably in their teens and twenties, so there might be a whole new audience for *Poldark*.

**What would your father have thought about these various generations all finding something relevant to them and their lives in his work?**

He would have loved it and been extremely pleased; any writer wants to think that their work goes on being interesting, and the only thing I think he would have cared a lot about, would be that the people making it retained as much authenticity to the novels as possible. I’ve absolutely no doubt one of the reasons why I was extremely happy to see what Mammoth Screen were doing was that from the very beginning it was clear it was the novels that motivated them.

**How have you enjoyed being close to the process of bringing *Poldark* to the screen?**

It’s been extraordinarily interesting. I’ve been on a film set before when one of my father’s books was being made into a movie – Hitchcock made ‘Marnie’ into a movie – so it wasn’t the first time to go on set, and it wasn’t the first time I’ve looked at film scripts, but it’s a wholly new process. I’m an academic working in a university and this was a different world completely. I had absolutely no idea there were so many different processes to go through with so many different people doing things; the continuity, the makeup, the lighting, the sound, all the processes that go on with balancing colouring, grading, mixing – I found it fascinating!

**Was there a particular stand out moment?**

You’re bound to remember some things as they were fairly dramatic within themselves. We were trying to film the piece in which there’s a duel between Francis and Andrew Blamey happening outside Nampara and it was a really ‘good Cornish day’ – the wind was about 50mph and rain spalls were coming in, even though it was the middle of May the temperature was below zero degrees. These poor actors were trying to rush out of the house at a time where there might not be torrential rain and still the wind was blowing but they kept doing it and of course, when you watch it, you would never know that!
Have you always spent a lot of time in Cornwall?

I lived there until I was 17 and I must have been back to Cornwall at least once every year since then. After my parents moved and went to live in Sussex, they would go down to Cornwall for a holiday every year – maybe three times – and my wife, Peggotty, and I went down once a year. It has a real place in my heart.

Do you feel that the people of Cornwall have got a place in their hearts for Poldark?

I think they would have to speak for that, but I know that there’s a strong interest in it. I think that the Cornish people who have been there a long time take quite a while to decide whether you’re really interested in them and want to be there. I think my father certainly felt that as he wasn’t Cornish – he moved from Lancashire when he was 17, but my mother was. I think that most Cornish people would feel Poldark gives a pretty fair and honest account of Cornwall; it isn’t trying to pretend that it’s more romantic than it is, that it’s more beautiful than it is, but it is saying that it can be the most amazing place. Neither does it does it try to pretend that life for people in the late 18th Century was anything other than staggeringly hard with people on the edge of starvation!

Do you have any memories of Poldark from the series filmed in the 70s? Was it a nice connection to have Robin Ellis back for this?

I wasn’t on set much at all, my mother and father were a great deal, but we got to know a lot of the actors’ very well - Robin and Angharad Rees, Clive Francis, Ralph Bates, Christopher Biggins etc. It was very clear that all the actors liked my parents and vice versa. My parents like to have parties so the actors came over to them and for lunch at our house in Sussex, so we got to know the actors very well indeed. They were a lovely set of people – and to have Robin back is great, I think he’s really enjoying it! There is a real affinity for him, that’s a nice link to the past.
Episode One

Ross Poldark (Aidan Turner) joins the army to avoid charges of smuggling. He goes to fight in the American War of Independence leaving behind his sweetheart, Elizabeth (Heida Reed), with the promise that he will return soon. Three years later, wounded and scarred, Ross returns home to discover that his father has died, his estate is in ruins and Elizabeth is set to marry his cousin, Francis (Kyle Soller).

Elizabeth and Francis are married. Ross is surprised to see that callous banker George Warleggan (Jack Farthing) is at the groom’s side. Ross’ uncle, Charles Poldark (Warren Clarke) thinks that it would be better for the newlyweds if Ross were to leave Cornwall and he offers to pay for Ross to make a fresh start elsewhere. Ross stubbornly refuses, determined to rebuild his family estate, Nampara. With only the help of his father’s useless servants, Jud and Prudie (Phil Davies and Beatie Edney), Ross takes on a new kitchen-maid, Demelza (Eleanor Tomlinson), after he rescues her from a beating.

When Elizabeth makes it clear that she no longer loves him, Ross furiously decides to leave Cornwall. However, Demelza’s abusive father turns up to take her back and brings with him a gang of brutish thugs determined to fight. Seeing the local miners stand up for him and take on the gang, Ross realises that his home is here amongst his friends. On his way back to Nampara, he sees Elizabeth who has come to beg him to stay and it is clear to Ross that she still has feelings for him.

Episode Two

When local mine Wheal Reath is closed, hundreds of miners, including Jim (Alexander Arnold), find themselves out of work and desperately poor. Ross (Aidan Turner), having repaired Nampara, now employs Jim as a farm-hand, and thinks to resurrect his family’s mine, Wheal Leisure. He hopes to bring prosperity to the area again, but is advised against the venture by his banker and friend, Harris Pascoe, who does not believe he could find speculators in the current climate.

Meanwhile, Verity (Ruby Bentall) asks Ross to accompany her to a ball at the Assembly Rooms, where she meets Captain Andrew Blamey (Richard Harrington) and falls madly in love. However, Blamey is hiding a dark secret that he must tell her. Ross, with the help of mine Captain Henshawe (John Hollingworth) and willing investor Horace Treneglos (Michael Culkin), manages to convince Pascoe that Wheal Leisure is a viable business. But it is his intimate dance with Elizabeth (Heida Reed) that causes a stir at the ball and gives the other guests a reason to gossip.
Under George’s (Jack Farthing) influence, a jealous Francis (Kyle Soller) decides not to go into business with Ross. Meanwhile, Ross must help Verity arrange a tryst with Captain Blamey after Charles discovered Blamey’s scandalous past and forbids her from seeing him. Francis, spurred by his jealousy of Ross and angered by this fresh betrayal, challenges Blamey to an ill-fated duel. Ross is able to save Francis’ life, but Charles (Warren Clarke) blames Ross for the incident and will not forgive him. Elizabeth, however, is extremely grateful to Ross, revealing that she is pregnant with Francis’ child.
Cast & Crew

Cast

Ross Poldark ................................................................. Aidan Turner
Demelza ................................................................. Eleanor Tomlinson
Elizabeth ................................................................. Heida Reed
Francis ................................................................. Kyle Soller
Verity ................................................................. Ruby Bentall
George Warleggan ..................................................... Jack Farthing
Charles Poldark ....................................................... Warren Clarke
Prudie ................................................................. Beatie Edney
Jud Paynter ............................................................ Phil Davis
Jim Carter ............................................................. Alexander Arnold
Captain Andrew Blamey ................................................ Richard Harrington
Mrs Teague ............................................................ Mary Woodvine
Dr Choake ............................................................. Robert Daws
Captain Henshaw ...................................................... John Hollingworth
Horace Trenglos ......................................................... Michael Culkin
Mark Daniel ............................................................. Matthew Wilson
Paul Daniel ............................................................ Ed Browning
Zacky Martin ........................................................... Tristan Sturrock
Tom Carne ............................................................... Mark Frost
Margaret ................................................................. Crystal Leaity
Cary Warleggan ........................................................ Pip Torrens
Mrs Chynoweth ........................................................ Sally Dexter
Aunt Agatha ............................................................ Caroline Blakiston
Jinny ............................................................... Gracee O'Brien
Rev Halse ............................................................... Robin Ellis
Dwight Enys ............................................................. Luke Norris
Keren Smith ............................................................ Sabrina Bartlett
Production Team

Executive Producers...........Damien Timmer, Karen Thrussell, Polly Hill, Rebecca Eaton
Producer ...............................................................Eliza Mellor
Director ...............................................................Ed Bazalgette, William McGregor
Writer and Executive producer........................................Debbie Horsfield
Directors of Photography.................................Cinders Forshaw, Adam Etherington
Editors ...............................................................Adam Recht, Adam Green, Robin Hill
Production Designer ..................................................Catrin Meredydd
Costume Designer ......................................................Marianne Agertoft
Make-up designer ........................................................Jacqui Fowler
Composer ..............................................................Anne Dudley
Casting.................................................................Susie Parriss
Horse Master ..........................................................Mark Atkinson
Poldark Consultant....................................................Andrew Graham

Ends