

# 'THE SET IS OUR HOME'

The *Call The Midwife* cast spill the beans on their on- and off-screen relationships as the show's sixth series begins

**T**hey spent their Christmas in South Africa, but now the nuns of Nonnatus House are back in east London for the sixth series of *Call The Midwife*.

And when we catch up with the cast of the BBC One drama, who have been gracing our screens for four years now, it sounds like they're happy to be back at their home base.

Smiling, actress Kate Lamb, who plays Nurse Delia Busby, tells us, 'The set is like our home. Everyone lives there, practically.'

The festive special saw the midwives help a tiny hospital on the Eastern Cape. And, despite being away from their familiar surroundings, it seems their South African getaway brought the cast closer off-screen, as evenings became 'a bonding activity'.

Charlotte Ritchie, who plays Nurse Barbara Gilbert, admits she missed spending extra time with her castmates when they finally returned to the UK.

'It was sad to come home and not be back together after South Africa,' she says.

Luckily for the 27-year-old, the period drama was commissioned for a further three series, which means the crew are likely to be together all the way into 2020.

So how does it feel to be signed up for three more years?

'It's very flattering for us,' grins actor Cliff Parisi (Fred Buckle), as co-star

Stephen McGann (Dr Patrick Turner) adds, 'It's definitely a vote of confidence.'

But, with more series tends to come new characters, which Kate explains is rewarding, although it puts an extra bit of pressure on the cast.

'Guest actors come in and they're just brilliant. And it means we're always trying to be as good as we can be,' she says.

## A LOVING SERIES

Set in 1962, the sixth series will see the nuns face the era of the contraceptive pill, the Cuban Missile Crisis and the ongoing effects of thalidomide.

But while scenes are likely to tug at your heartstrings, award-winning actress Judy Parfitt, who plays Sister Monica Joan, tells us this could be the most loving series yet.

'We're dealing with difficult subjects, and within that, there's love,' she smiles.

During the Christmas special, we were treated to a surprise engagement between Reverend Tom Hereward and Barbara.

And it seems like actors Jack Ashton and Charlotte Ritchie are just as close off-set, as co-star Cliff jokes, 'I feel like I'm sitting between a married couple.'

Laughing, Charlotte tells us, 'We actually get on really well. It's lovely doing our scenes. [Barbara and Tom] are a lovely pair - the way they're written.'



**'We're not allowed to say anything, but Patsy and Delia are living together'**



Romance is on the cards for both Patsy (above) and Barbara



So will the couple tie the knot this series?

'They're so similar in lots of ways and challenge each other. But they're both putting lots of things before the marriage. This series, there's so much going on - it's not the focus of their world,' Charlotte says.

'Tom is just happy someone else said yes,' laughs Jack, recalling Rev Tom's bad luck with Nurse Trixie Franklin, played by off-screen girlfriend Helen George.

But Tom and Barbara's romance isn't the only one set to turn up the heat this series, as things are about to get serious for nurses Patsy Mount and Delia...

'Who knows what will happen?' smiles Kate when we quiz them on their secret lesbian romance.

'We're not allowed to say anything, but certainly Patsy and Delia are living together in Nonnatus House,' Emerald Fennell (Nurse Patsy) hints.

But, as they face the harsh realities of 60s Britain, Kate admits, 'It can never really be anything else [unless] they also want to quit their jobs.'

Grace Henry

*Call The Midwife*, Sundays, BBC One, 8pm

## JUDY: 'DEMENTIA IS A DREADFUL DISEASE'

**A**ctress Judy Parfitt sadly lost her husband, actor Tony Steedman, to dementia 16 years ago, and the 81-year-old admits about her husband's struggle with the disease, admitting last year, 'My beloved husband had gone. He'd become my child.'

'It's the most dreadful disease,' she bravely tells. '[Sister Monica] is a challenge. One minute she's bright - she's highly educated,

intelligent and well-read - but then she has this incipient dementia.'

The actress has been open about her husband's struggle with the disease, admitting last year, 'My beloved husband had gone. He'd become my child.'

Now, as her character's battle worsens, Judy reveals, 'People are frightened of those with dementia. They don't know how to react to it.'



Nurse Barbara's nuptials may have to take a back seat



L-R: Charlotte Ritchie (Nurse Barbara), Helen George (Nurse Trixie), Emerald Fennell (Nurse Patsy)

Series five saw the Turners caught up in the thalidomide crisis

