

MIDSOMER MURDERS

**NEIL DUDGEON AND JASON HUGHES
RETURN IN A NEW SERIES OF
THE TOP-RATING DRAMA**

A BENTLEY PRODUCTION

TX: PRIMETIME WINTER on ITV1

Schooled in Murder – Jason Hughes - final episode!

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MIDSOMER MURDERS

JASON HUGHES TO LEAVE MIDSOMER

'*Schooled in Murder*' will be the last ever episode starring Jason Hughes as DS Jones, sidekick to DI Barnaby played by Neil Dudgeon.

Jason has decided to leave after filming over 50 episodes of the popular and long running series MIDSOMER MURDERS.

He says: 'It was a tough decision for me to go, as I have had a great time working on the show, both with John Nettles and now Neil Dudgeon, and the crew are like a second family. I feel it is the right time for me to leave, and after spending 7 happy years on Midsomer I am now looking at other projects, and my first one will be the pilot season in the US. It's a new year for me career wise which I am looking forward to, and though I am sorry to say goodbye to Midsomer, I hope to be able to come back if there is a 'special episode' in the pipeline!'

Producer Jo Wright of Bentley Productions is currently looking for the right person to replace Jason. She said: 'We are sad that Jason has decided to leave the series and of course will miss him tremendously. We are now looking for his replacement, and it's very exciting to start looking for a new face.'

- Jason's first episode was '*The House in the Woods*' in 2005. He went on to film over 100 hours of Midsomer Murders starring alongside John Nettles in 38 episodes. Since Neil Dudgeon took over the leading role, the latest detective duo have clocked up a further 14 episodes.
- Jason's first day filming involved finding a dead body in a car, a foretaste of the many bizarre murders he then went onto investigate. As DS Jones, Jason has also been almost killed by a tractor, dressed up as a nun, fallen out of trees, and gone undercover in a cult. He has fallen in the lake in the middle of freezing January and sang naked in the shower. In that one, he was a bit shocked when he was told to take his boxer shorts off, and then found out that they had to dub over his singing anyway because of a rights issue!
- Jason's other credits include *This Life*, *Plain Jane*, *The Flint Street Nativity*, *Phoenix Blue*, *Killing Me Softly*, *Mine All Mine*, *Waking The Dead*, *Coming Up* and *Dante's Daemon*.

Schooled in Murder

Neil Dudgeon and **Jason Hughes** return in a new two hour special of Britain's best-loved detective series, made by Bentley Productions.

Joining Neil as DCI John Barnaby and Jason as DS Ben Hughes are guest stars including **Con O'Neill**, **Martine McCutcheon**, and **Patrick Robinson**.

Fiona Dolman also returns as Barnaby's wife Sarah and **Tamzin Malleson** plays pathologist Dr Kate Wilding.

In "Schooled in Murder", Barnaby and Jones investigate the home of the world-famous Midsomer Blue when a woman is crushed to death with a giant round of cheese. Secret and controversial plans to modernise the dairy are revealed while rumours about private lives of the parents cause a row at the prestigious local prep school. As other people linked to the dairy meet agonising deaths, long-held secrets start to emerge...

MIDSOMER MURDERS attracts top viewing figures on ITV1 and is one of the UK's best programming exports with sales to 230 territories, from Afghanistan to Zambia.

It is also a hit on Facebook, where the official page has nearly 100,000 fans.

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Schooled in Murder - Synopsis

A woman is crushed to death with a giant round of cheese at the home of the world-famous Midsomer Blue. Secret and controversial plans to modernise the dairy are revealed while rumours about private lives of the parents cause a row at the prestigious local prep school. As other people linked to the dairy meet agonising deaths, long-held secrets start to emerge...

Debbie Moffett is crushed to death by a giant round of cheese just hours after an argument at a Parents' Council meeting at Midsomer Pastures Prep School. Debbie worked at the dairy which produces the world-famous Midsomer Blue and was found by her colleague Jim Caxton. Jim seems more anxious about his precious cheese than the death of Debbie.

Barnaby and Jones break the news to Debbie's daughter Holly and headmistress Sylvia Mountford. Former England rugby player turned dairy owner Gregory Brantner comes home from a night at a hotel. Gregory's wife Hayley, Oliver Ordish's wife Beatrix and Jim's sister-in-law Helen were all at prep school together and the Brantners recently returned to Midsomer to take over Hayley's family business.

Detectives are suspicious when no-one has a bad word to say about Debbie. Then Kate discovers Holly was being expelled. She's on a dairy scholarship which carries strict rules – which Debbie was breaking by allegedly having an affair. Debbie's phone leads police to Oliver, who works for the cheese board. He admits they were sleeping together.

Gregory explains that Debbie was helping him with his business – despite winning awards, its cheese-making is labour-intensive and loss-making. Just then, Helen arrives and empties her milk delivery over the yard, angry that Gregory has cancelled her order.

Beatrix and Oliver argue and he storms off. When he returns from the pub, he is garrotted and the next morning Kate finds his mouth full of unusual maggots.

The dairy appears to be crucial to the case. Helen's husband killed himself because his farm was struggling and Jim suspects she may be taking revenge. Then Beatrix's daughter Poppy disappears. Gregory admits he was due to meet Debbie the night she died to celebrate a new controversial deal, making Midsomer Blue for a national supermarket chain. Meanwhile, as Hayley tries to comfort Beatrix, Jones finds her missing daughter.

Jim is sacked as Kate suspects Oliver was killed with cheese wire and covered with cheese fly larvae and Jones discovers Gregory was paying the dead man a consultancy fee. Gregory tries to reassure Hayley that the dairy has a future, but that night he goes to investigate an alarm at the dairy and is stabbed through the heart with a cheese needle. Hayley tries to talk to Helen but her old school friend is not interested.

Then Jones discovers Beatrix had a child as a teenager – Jake, now an animal rights activist. Helen is hit with a wrench as she tends her cattle. Jim finds her and they declare their love before being trampled to death. Nearby, Jim's car is full of maggot-laden cheese.

Sylvia tells Beatrix and Hayley things have got out of hand. They deny any involvement but on the way home Beatrix collapses. Help comes from an unexpected source and the police rush back to their school. Can they stop the killer before the bitterness of the past leads to yet more deaths?

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Characters

Debbie Moffett - Martine McCutcheon

Feisty single mum Debbie grew up in Midsomer and attended the local prep school. She works at the dairy and her daughter Holly attends the school on a dairy scholarship.

Sylvia Mountford - Maggie Steed

Headmistress of Midsomer Pasture Prep, Sylvia is in her 60s, icy and proper. She has been there for 40 years and rules children and parents alike with a rod of iron.

Beatrix Ordish - Lucy Liemann

Former pupil Beatrix is now chairperson of the Parents' Council at the prep school and enjoys holding court. Pretty and prim, she's unhappily married to Oliver.

Oliver Ordish - Richard Dillane

Oliver works for a quango promoting UK cheese and is an advisor to Gregory. He's married to Beatrix but their outwardly devotion hides rifts and secrets on both sides.

Poppy Ordish - Eloise Webb

Poppy is Beatrix and Oliver's precocious and bright eight-year-old daughter.

Hayley Brantner - Hattie Morahan

Hayley, an aspiring writer, grew up in Midsomer where her father ran the dairy. She gladly left to marry Gregory, but her father's death brought her back and she hates it.

Gregory Brantner - Patrick Robinson

Former England rugby player Gregory Brantner arrived in Midsomer to take over the dairy after the death of his father-in-law. He's a fish out of water but wants to succeed.

Jim Caxton - Con O'Neill

Jim works at the dairy and has devoted his life to the production of the perfect Midsomer Blue cheese. As a result, he's socially inept and unable to express his emotions.

Helen Caxton - Kate Ashfield

Helen was recently widowed after the suicide of her husband, Jim's brother. She farms dairy cattle but faces an uncertain future as her herd is threatened by cuts at the dairy.

Jake Yapley - Jesse Fox

A young man with a secret past, Jake is intense and damaged and has turned his anger into animal rights activism.

Holly - Isabella Blake-Thomas

Debbie's sweet-natured daughter, aged eight, a pupil at Midsomer Pastures Prep.

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Guest Stars

Patrick Robinson plays Gregory Brantner

Patrick Robinson enjoyed spending time in the MIDSOMER MURDERS countryside for the episode "Schooled in Murder".

"I play Gregory Brantner, a former well-known rugby player turned businessman. Gregory means well and is quite straightforward and genuine, which is quite unusual in Midsomer I think! He has recently arrived in the countryside to take over his wife's father's dairy business after he dies.

"The dairy produces a famous cheese called Midsomer Blue, but the production methods are very old-fashioned and labour-intensive, so Gregory wants to make changes to help it become profitable. But he doesn't meet with much success and risks alienating the local community.

"He's also very loyal to his wife, who is a struggling writer, and he wants to make her happy. But their relationship is rather tense."

Adds Patrick: "It was a great experience coming into Midsomer - everyone was very welcoming, and I enjoyed filming in and around Oxfordshire and Berkshire. I knew Maggie Steed, who plays the headmistress, from before so that was good too."

The actor is perhaps best known as Ash in *Casualty*, a role he played between 1990 and 1998.

Says Patrick: "Even though I left all those years ago I still get recognised as Ash and it's all part of the legacy of being in such a high-rated series. It was one of my favourite roles and I'm always grateful for it."

Patrick's other credits include: *Harper and Iles*, *Driven*, *Pig Heart Boy*, *A Many Splintered Thing*, *Shadow Play*, *Headless*, *Belly of the Beast* and *The Bill*.

He says: "Since I left *Casualty* I've been involved in different roles and they have all been interesting so I feel very privileged. I've been in *War Horse* on the stage and I also like to write and a few years ago I wrote and directed my own short play. I intend to fulfil more of my own projects one day."

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Con O'Neill plays Jim Caxton

Con O'Neill shared his days on MIDSOMER MURDERS with herds of cattle and giant wheels of cheese.

"I play Jim Caxton who works at a dairy producing the famous Midsomer Blue cheese. He's passionate about cheese and his job but he's excruciatingly uncomfortable around women and has the social skills of a brick. I like a bit of cheese but I'm not obsessed like Jim is.

"We had to work with real cheese, huge wheels of them, and I had to eat some of it – but that wasn't the worst of it. In one scene, my character is surrounded by great herds of milking cows. When we filmed the scene, there were a lot of nervous cows around, and I was nervous about them in a very confined space.

"There was a strong smell of cattle and when a cow gets nervous they tend to do one of two things to ease the tension or pressure. It seemed to me that they were doing either of these two things throughout the whole day! I was glad to get home and into a hot bath to get rid of the smell."

Despite the beastly encounter, Con enjoyed the experience.

"It was good playing Jim - because he is so awkward there is some comedic value. I also find damaged characters quite compelling to play. He deals with a murder at the dairy by concentrating on his work. He may appear callous but he doesn't really mean to, he just doesn't have any social graces.

"It was a great experience, as everyone in the cast is totally charming and so established and at ease. I've been a fan of Neil Dudgeon's for years so it was good to work with him. It feels like we are all cohabiting in the same arena, not fighting egos."

Adds Con: "My family are all delighted I got the part and will be watching!"

Con has had a busy year with a range of projects.

"I'm in the feature film *G.B.H.* playing a disabled ex-policeman, and I've just finished an American TV mini-series called *The Bible*, retelling well-known Bible stories. I play St Paul, and we filmed that in Morocco.

"St Paul is interesting because he didn't believe at first, but when he had a vision of Christ he became completely convinced that he was the Messiah and devoted his life to God. Sometimes I can't even decide what socks to wear so it was compelling and challenging to play someone who was so committed. It's one of my favourite roles to date, along with *TelStar* and playing Mickey in *Blood Brothers*."

Con's other credits include *Dancin' Through The Dark*, *Moving Story*, *3 Steps to Heaven*, *Cider With Rosie*, *Bedrooms and Hallways*, *Waking The Dead*, *In Deep*, *Criminal Justice*, *Bash Street* and *Frank*.

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Martine McCutcheon plays Debbie Moffett

Martine McCutcheon rounds off a busy year with a guest appearance in MIDSOMER MURDERS: "Schooled in Murder".

She explains: "I'm a troublemaker in the episode which is set around a posh prep school. My character is well to do and feisty, she's not Tiffany from Albert Square."

The former soap queen plays Debbie Moffett, who argues with the Midsomer Pastures prep school over plans to expel her daughter Holly – because Debbie, not Holly, has broken a strict code of conduct.

Debbie also works at the nearby dairy which produces world-famous Midsomer Blue cheese, where events take a nasty turn.

"It's great to do something I wouldn't normally do, as she's not a nice piece of work," says Martine.

The episode comes shortly after Martine tied the knot with her fiancé, singer-songwriter Jack McManus in September in a romantic ceremony on the shores of Italy's Lake Como.

Says Martine: "We are best friends as well as lovers and totally supportive of one another. We feel that we can conquer anything the world throws at us as long as we have each other, and that's a rare thing."

The new bride admitted it was her mother Jenny who knew Jack was 'the one' from the word go. 'Mum adores Jack and could not wait for him to become my husband,' she says.

Martine studied at the renowned Italia Conti stage school in London from the age of 10 before winning a part in the BBC children's series *Bluebirds* in 1989. At 15 she was picked to front the all-girl band Milan. Her big break was winning the role of Tiffany in *EastEnders* and she appeared in more than 350 episodes over four years.

After leaving the soap, Martine appeared in the film *Love Actually* and her other credits include *Kiss Kiss (Bang Bang)*, *The Knock*, *The English Harem*, *Jump!* and *Echo Beach*. She also starred as Eliza in the West End revival of *My Fair Lady* and has released three albums.

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Schooled in Murder - Cast List

| | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| DCI John Barnaby | Neil Dudgeon |
| DS Ben Jones | Jason Hughes |
| Sarah Barnaby | Fiona Dolman |
| Kate Wilding | Tamzin Malleison |
| Hayley Brantner | Hattie Morahan |
| Gregory Brantner | Patrick Robinson |
| Beatrix Ordish | Lucy Liemann |
| Oliver Ordish | Richard Dillane |
| Poppy Ordish | Eloise Webb |
| Debbie Moffett | Martine McCutcheon |
| Sylvia Mountford | Maggie Steed |
| Jim Caxton | Con O'Neill |
| Helen Caxton | Kate Ashfield |
| Jake Yapley | Jesse Fox |
| Holly | Isabella BlakeThomas |
| PC Milton | Sian Clifford |

Production Credits

| | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| Producer | Jo Wright |
| Director | Andy Hay |
| Writer | Lisa Holdsworth |
| Composer | Jim Parker |
| Consultant | Betty Willingale |
| Based on characters created by | Caroline Graham |

A Bentley Production for ITV1

Producer – Jo Wright

Jo Wright was part of the small team that launched Channel 4. From there she went to Thames TV to work as an assistant producer on the award-winning *British Cinema* documentary series with directors Richard Attenborough, Alan Parker and Lindsay Anderson.

Richard Attenborough asked her to produce and direct a documentary for the BBC about his film set in South Africa, *Cry Freedom*. She later joined Select to produce *Tracey Ullman: A Class Act* for HBO and *Lovejoy* for the BBC. After producing the first series of the police drama *Out of the Blue*, she became an executive producer in BBC Drama Serials where she worked on various projects, including the *Doctor Who* TV movie (made with Fox in the US) and the award winning *The Sculptress*.

She was then made Head of Drama Series at the BBC where she was responsible for over 200 hours of popular drama a year, including *EastEnders*, *Casualty*, *This Life*, *Silent Witness* and *City Central*.

For three years she was Controller of Drama, London Weekend Television, where she looked after programmes which included *London's Burning*, *The Knock*, *Hero of the Hour*, *Blonde Bombshell*, *Forgotten*, *Buried Treasure* and the multi award-winning *Othello*. (Shown on PBS and winner of the Peabody award).

Jo then produced the drama series *55 Degrees North* for BBC1. She has since worked as a consultant to Lifetime TV in Los Angeles, where she developed their Emmy award winning mini-series *Human Trafficking*.

She then made a film, in South Africa, written by John Fortune, for the BBC about the attempted coup in Equatorial Guinea, *COUP!*, starring Jared Harris and Robert Bathurst. She returned to South Africa to produce a drama pilot called *Life is Wild* for the CW network in the US, which was picked up as a series.

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Writer

Lisa Holdsworth – Schooled in Murder

Lisa Holdsworth has written for a wide scope of television. She wrote an episode of *Fat Friends* in 2002 and then moved onto soaps as a regular writer for *Emmerdale* (2003-2006). In 2006 Lisa then moved onto *New Tricks* and also wrote two episodes for the BBC television series *Robin Hood*, as well as regular episodes for *Waterloo Road*. “Schooled in Murder” is Lisa’s first episode of MIDSOMER MURDERS.

Director

Andy Hay – Schooled in Murder

Andy has an eclectic range of directing work including *EastEnders*, where he directed 6 episodes from 2000-2002, and *Casualty* in the same year. He then went onto a broad scope of television dramas with *Judge John Deed*, *Spooks*, *Trial and Retribution*, *Hotel Babylon*, and *Waking the Dead* (2003-2011). His work also includes the TV movie *Marple: the Pale Horse* (2010) and most recently *Silent Witness*. “Schooled in Murder” is Andy’s first directing credit for MIDSOMER MURDERS.