

By Anna Pukas

POLDARK returned to our screens last night, back in the prestigious Sunday evening show-case slot it occupied 40 years ago. Much comment and many column inches have been devoted to this revival that is said to follow the original novels more closely than the 1970s' version.

If so that is a wise move for it transpires that Winston Graham, the creator of this tale of passion and betrayal set in 18th-century Cornwall, hated how the BBC chose to portray his characters. In particular he detested the way Demelza, the feisty servant, was changed from spirited tomboy to a slut. According to his daughter, Graham was so angry that he wanted to stop the series being transmitted.

"Dad blew a gasket when he saw the first episode of the original series," says Rosamund Barteau. "He was so angry about the way they had changed Demelza into a floozy that he wanted to get the production stopped. He was absolutely livid. In the novel she was a tomboy but the producers had some salacious need to make her sexually loose. In one scene she even offered to pull down her knickers for a shilling. That was certainly not in any of the books."

The first BBC series was adapted from the first four Poldark novels (there were 12 in all) and first shown in 1975. After viewing the first episode Graham feared the rest of the series would deteriorate into schmalz. His daughter reveals: "He tried everything to stop the show from airing but he didn't have any editorial control. It was not until the second series that he was able to have any input."

By then Poldark had become such a huge hit at home that vicars were known to change the times of their evening services in order not to clash with it. The second series was based on the next three books. In total Poldark ran for 29 episodes. It was sold to 40 countries and was especially popular in the US where it was shown on the prestigious Masterpiece Theatre slot. In a national poll in 2007 American viewers voted it the seventh best British series ever broadcast.

ROBIN ELLIS, who played Captain Ross Poldark, became a national heart-throb. Demelza was played by Angharad Rees, whose tumbling red hair spawned a fashion for perms. The heart of the drama lies in the relationship between Ross and his future wife Demelza, which crossed the class divide. He though impoverished is from the officer and gentleman class while Demelza is only a servant.

The portrayal of Demelza as promiscuous was doubly uncomfortable for Graham because he had based the character on his own wife Jean. Their daughter Rosamund reveals that Jean not only inspired Demelza but helped her husband in other ways.

"Father was the author but my mother helped with the details because she was very observant. She saw everything and remembered it all. Dad would write something every day. Every afternoon he would have tea with my mother for an hour when he would bounce ideas at her."

Though he was born in Manchester, Winston Graham moved to Perranporth, Cornwall, when he was 17 and lived there for more than 30 years, bringing up his children Rosamund and Andrew there and setting his 12 Poldark novels there. The first,

HOW POLDARK CREATOR HATED THE BBC'S FIRST TV ADAPTATION



ICONS: Robin Ellis and Angharad Rees in the 1970s' version and Aidan Turner and Eleanor Tomlinson, inset, in the current series

Pictures: BBC

As a remake of the period drama begins, it emerges that the author of the novels, Winston Graham, was furious over the portrayal of Demelza and wanted the 1970s series pulled

Ross Poldark, was published in 1945. The last novel Bella Poldark was published in 2002, only a year before Winston Graham's death at the age of 95.

He was hugely prolific, producing a book a year from 1934 until his death. Graham's last book was his autobiography *Memoirs Of A Private Man*, published in 2003 shortly before he died.

Though the cast of the 1970s' series spent eight weeks filming the first series on location in Cornwall, it was sometimes all too obvious that the moving background had actually been projected on to a screen behind the characters.

For Robin Ellis and Angharad Rees, their Poldark characters

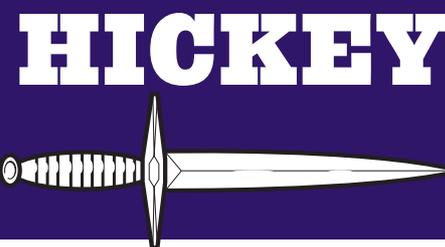
proved to be career-defining, forever linked to their names by the phrase "best known for". Though both continued to work neither ever appeared in anything as high profile again. Rees started a jewellery design company and died of pancreatic cancer in 2012, aged 63. Robin Ellis now lives in France and writes diabetic cookery books although he does have a cameo role in the new series.

The mantle of Ross and Demelza now passes to the brooding Irish-born Aidan Turner, 31, whose biggest role to date is the dwarf Kili in *The Hobbit and Death Comes To Pemberley* actress Eleanor Tomlinson, 22, who coincidentally also has a brother called Ross.

With the 2015 version the Cornish landscape is likely to become an important character in its own right and the production will also benefit from much-improved special effects.

In the end Winston Graham embraced the 1970s' Poldark series and so has his daughter, who runs a Poldark-themed guesthouse in Idaho. But she says her father would have liked the 2015 adaptation much more.

"I've seen the first episode and I could sit and watch it again and again. Eleanor's Demelza is wonderful and her Cornish accent is good, not too strong but enough to know where she is supposed to be from. My dad would be proud of what the BBC have done."



WHILE discussing drugs policy on radio station LBC, Nick Clegg, pictured, was quizzed about his own experience.

Pressed by host Nick Ferrari on whether he had ever taken illegal substances the Deputy Prime Minister replied: "I don't think what I did in my misspent youth as a teenager or in my early 20s has any bearing on the wider debate on whether I think the war on drugs is working or not."

What is known about Clegg's "misspent youth" is that at university he dressed up as David Bowie's flamboyant alter-ego Ziggy Stardust.



THEIR musical worlds don't usually collide but legendary rocker David Crosby has been left feeling more than a little perturbed by rapper Kanye West.

Indeed he has nothing positive to say about West who hit the headlines last month when he protested against singer-songwriter Beck winning the Grammy award for best album instead of Beyoncé – and then later sheepishly apologised.

Quizzed about Kanye's "impact as an artist" during a Twitter chat with his fans Crosby replied: "He's an idiot and a poser... has no talent at all."

At least West's recent collaboration with Sir Paul McCartney hasn't ruined Crosby's opinion of the Beatle. His view of Macca? "One of the best ever." Phew.

POP singer Sophie Ellis-Bextor has resorted to an unusual inspiration for her latest album: hard booze.

The sweeter-than-sweet star, who has failed to dazzle the pop charts since her 2001 hit *Murder On The Dancefloor*, insists her sixth solo album is akin to tequila.

"I've just got back from Mexico and [musician and co-writer] Ed Harcourt has been to Cuba recently," says Sophie.

"Last year's album *Wanderlust* was inspired by Eastern Europe so if it were a spirit it was vodka and this will be an album sounding like tequila."

Whatever next?

VETERAN rocker Sting, pictured, has nailed his political colours to the mast just weeks before the general election, announcing: "I've been a Labour supporter since I was a kid."

Reportedly worth £200million the songwriter, who was born in Wallsend near Newcastle, then confirmed: "No one voted Tory in Wallsend."

Quite how this goes down back in the family home is another matter. It emerged in 2009 that Sting's film producer wife Trudie Styler had donated £3,500 to the Richmond Park branch of the Conservative Party for whom Tory MP Zac Goldsmith successfully stood the following year.

Speaking about Conservative leader David Cameron at the time Trudie admitted: "I really admire him hugely."

WHILE most youngsters look to fake ID cards or slicking back their hair to get into nightclubs illusionist Dynamo says he used to impress strict bouncers by performing tricks.

The diminutive trickster, whose real name is Steven Frayne, tells Hickey he left some of Bradford's door security reeling in wonder.

He said: "I used to do tricks to get into clubs all the time. I've got a baby face even now and back when I was 20 I looked about 12."

"I had to blag my way into clubs that I was legally allowed to be in so magic was something I used."

If only abracadabra would do something to the post office queue.

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