

Cast update for new ITV drama Mr Bates vs the Post Office

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Toby Jones, Monica Dolan, Julie Hesmondhalgh, Lia Williams, Alex Jennings, Ian Hart, Katherine Kelly, Shaun Dooley, Will Mellor, Clare Calbraith, Lesley Nicol, Amit Shah and Adam James join the cast for new ITV drama Mr Bates vs. The Post Office

Filming has begun on new ITV series Mr Bates vs the Post Office, written by acclaimed screenwriter Gwyneth Hughes (Tom Jones, Honour, Vanity Fair) and produced by ITV Studios and Little Gem.

Mr Bates vs the Post Office has been commissioned by ITV's Head of Drama, Polly Hill, and will be overseen by ITV Commissioning Editor Helen Perry.

Cast announced for the 4 x 60' ITV1 and IT VX drama includes BAFTA award-winning Toby Jones (Empire of Light, Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy and Detectorists)

who will play Alan Bates. Monica Dolan (The Thief, His Wife and The Canoe), Julie Hesmondhalgh (The Pact, The Trouble With Maggie Cole), Alex Jennings (This Is Going to Hurt, The Crown), Ian Hart (The Responder), Lia Williams (The Crown, The Capture), Will Mellor (Coronation Street, No Offence), Clare Calbraith (Grace, Anne), Shaun Dooley (Gentleman Jack, It's A Sin), Amit Shah (Happy Valley) Lesley Nicol (Downton Abbey) Adam James (The Suspect, Vigil) and Katherine Kelly (Bloods, Gentleman Jack) are also in the cast.

The series will be directed by James Strong (Broadchurch, Crime, Vigil) and produced by Chris Clough (World On Fire, The Missing). It will be executive produced by Patrick Spence (A Spy Among Friends, Adult Material) for ITV Studios, Gwyneth Hughes, Natasha Bondy and Ben Gale on behalf of Little Gem (Emily Atack: Asking For It?, Paul Merson: Football, Gambling and Me), James Strong and Joe Williams (Litvinenko, Lupin).

The drama tells the story of one of the greatest miscarriages of justice in British legal history. Hundreds of innocent sub-postmasters and postmistresses were wrongly accused of theft, fraud and false accounting due to a defective IT system. Many of the wronged workers were prosecuted, some of whom were imprisoned for crimes they never committed, and their lives were irreparably ruined by the scandal.

Following the landmark Court of Appeal decision to overturn their criminal convictions, dozens of former sub postmasters and postmistresses have been exonerated on all counts as they battled to finally clear their names. They fought for over ten years finally proving their innocence and sealing a resounding victory, but all involved believe the fight is not over yet, not by a long way.

Alan Bates said:

"This is one of the most egregious scandals the country has ever seen and a major corporation has managed to keep it covered up for years. Thankfully this has now been exposed and the victims are finally on their way to finding the justice they deserve."

Toby Jones, who plays Alan Bates in the series, said:

"I am proud to be a part of this shocking, unsettling but ultimately inspirational drama."

Executive Producer, Patrick Spence, said:

“We could not be more thrilled and grateful at this line up.”

Executive Producer, Natasha Bondy, said:

“Despite this being a scandal that is now widely regarded as the biggest miscarriage of justice in our country’s legal history, it’s still a story that many people don’t know about. We hope this series changes that.”

ITV Commissioning Editor Helen Perry said:

“We are so grateful to the extraordinary cast that have come together for this show. Their talent will help shine a spotlight on one of the most important and unbelievable stories of injustice in recent British history.”

Between 2000 and 2015, the Post Office held thousands of its own sub postmasters and postmistresses liable for financial discrepancies thrown up by Horizon, its hugely expensive but unreliable computerised accounting system.

Despite warnings that the system was flawed, the Post Office relentlessly pursued the sub postmasters and postmistresses, telling many of them they were the only ones having problems with Horizon.

Of those affected by the faulty IT system, 736 were prosecuted, hundreds more lost livelihoods, homes and life savings because they paid back money the Post Office claimed was missing.

Several went to prison, some whilst pregnant or with young children and many were shunned by their communities. Some have since died before they could find any justice.

The drama will narrate how in 2009, a group of sub postmasters from across the UK, decided enough was enough and formed the Justice For Subpostmasters Alliance.

ITV Studios will be responsible for the international distribution of the drama.

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Press Contacts

sarah.gaffney@itv.com

Picture Contacts

patrick.smith@itv.com

Viewer enquiries

<https://www.itv.com/contact/how-to-get-in-touch>