

# Acclaimed actress Tracie Bennett to return to the cobbles after 22 years

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Coronation Street's Rita Tanner is to get a blast from the past next month when her errant foster daughter Sharon returns to Weatherfield.

Award winning West End and Broadway actress Tracie Bennett will be reprising the role she made famous in the 80s and 90s.

Sharon Bentley was last seen on the cobbles in 1999, and no one is more surprised to see her than Rita, especially as the pair fell out over Sharon's attempt to sell the Kabin after it was gifted to her.

Jenny Connor is also less than impressed with the prodigal foster daughter's return and Rita's decision to give Sharon another chance.

What has brought Sharon back to a place where she has more enemies than friends, and will Rita live to regret letting this cuckoo back into the nest?

On her return to Coronation Street 22 years after leaving, and 39 years since she first arrived as troubled teenager Sharon, Tracie said: "I am absolutely thrilled to be returning to the cobbles. It is a dream come true for me, I had such an amazing time there and I am looking forward to working with Barbara again and getting my teeth into the storylines they have planned for Sharon.

"I was first approached about coming back about 18 months ago, I was keen and excited to see what was in store but my work schedule and then the pandemic has meant that it has taken till now for it all to come together. I am so pleased that I can finally tell everyone as it has been hard trying to keep the secret."

Producer Iain MacLeod said: "It's extremely exciting to see someone of Tracie's calibre revisit a role so rich in history and with such a complicated psychology. Sharon returns across some badly burned bridges to reconnect with Rita - but very quickly her presence becomes destabilising and extremely dangerous, in ways that I hope the viewers won't see coming. The big question is: what has her life become since she was last on the Street? The answer to that question will drive a massive story for us, which runs into the summer and beyond."

Tracie made 173 appearances as Sharon in 1982, 1983-84, and 1999 ruffling more than a few feathers along the way. She made a play for Brian Tilsley, and lied to Gail that they were having an affair, before leaving under a cloud. Returning briefly in 1983 she caught the eye of Curly Watts but dumped him for his mate Terry Duckworth.

In 1999 she came back to invite Rita to her wedding to Ian Bentley, who she subsequently dumped at the altar - exposing his affair with Natalie Barnes. Happy that Sharon decided to stay around after the wedding fiasco, Rita offered Sharon a job at The Kabin. Sharon happily accepted, although she soon clashed with Rita's assistant Leanne Battersby. Much to Leanne's horror, and that of few of Rita's other friends, Rita offered The Kabin to Sharon as a birthday gift. Rita admitted to Sharon that she offered her the business as she was lonely.

After an ill-fated romance with Danny Hargreaves and a suicide attempt Sharon got back in touch with ex fiance Ian and much to Rita's dismay she put the Kabin up for sale to purchase a house with Ian in Bolton. Rita bought the Kabin back off Sharon and sent her packing.

Since leaving Coronation Street Tracie has become one of theatre's foremost leading ladies, winning two Olivier Awards for roles in West End productions and was nominated for a Tony Award for her portrayal of Judy Garland in End of the Rainbow on Broadway. Other musical theatre roles include Les Miserable and Hairspray. She recently played Carlotta in the National theatre production of Follies and starred in the revival of Mame at Hope Mill Theatre where she is patron. Television work includes acclaimed ITV dramas Scott and Bailey and The Bay.

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