

Nurse Granger (Dorothy Atkinson), Sister Ada Russel (Sarah Smart) and Probationer Nellie Bowers (Tessa Parr)

KILL OR CURE

If you need reminding just how lucky we are to live in the 21st Century, tune in for another dose of BBC1's Edwardian hospital drama

CASUALTY
1909,
TOMORROW,
BBC1

Following the ratings success of warts and all medical dramas *Casualty 1906* and *1907*, more forgotten heroes are brought to life in a new six-part series, *Casualty 1909*.

Original cast members Cherie Lunghi, as legendary matron Eva Luckes, and Sarah Smart (ward sister Ada Russel) return and Edwardian case notes are again used to bring an authentic air to the series. The show has been given a longer run, so as to explore the lives of those who sacrificed so much in the name of medical research.

Episode one explores the life of notorious surgeon Dr Henry Dean, played by Paul Hilton, a central figure in the debate over the dangers of chloroform. While operating and advising on the risks of anaesthetic methods, Dean battled an addiction to cocaine.

"Dean was regarded as a brilliant surgeon before things disintegrated," says series producer Bryn Higgins. "They wrote of him as a statesman-like figure."

The diaries of Higgins' grandfather, who trained at The London, describe Dean as 'irascible'. He began using cocaine as a hay fever remedy, but his dependency increased after losing his wife and child to TB.

"Every now and then he had to take a few weeks off and there are notes written saying,



Cherie Lunghi
as matron
Eva Luckes

'is it the same old story?' He functioned quite well for a long time, like someone that can handle their drink."

Little Dorrit's Anton Lesser portrays another leading innovator of the day, neurologist Dr Henry Head, who displayed incredible self-sacrifice to medicine.

"He liked dealing with patients with strange mental and physical conditions," explains Higgins.

"They didn't realise how the nervous system worked so he did a lot of experiments and research, including some on himself. He really did put his money where his mouth is, doing extraordinary experiments that no doctor would do today."

The deprivation of Whitechapel has been recreated in Manchester's Victoria Baths, saved by BBC2's *Restoration* series in 2003.

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Vast sets were constructed in an old factory and the nurses' quarters were based at Croxteth Hall in Liverpool.

One of the most tender cases in the drama is that of a child prostitute who is treated after being beaten. But she soon escapes into the clutches of her pimp.

"There were hundreds of these children," explains Higgins. "The London tried to help them by treating diseases such as gonorrhoea, but they'd never stay."

All cases in the series are seen through the eyes of matron Eva Luckes and three nurses, one of whom is seen having a love affair with a Jewish activist.

"It's an interesting angle because women were frustrated by all the restrictions placed on them," says Higgins.

"It was still frowned upon for female nurses to marry right up until the 50s and 60s.

"Cherie's character believes relationships and nursing are not compatible. Some regarded it as a spiritual calling," explains Higgins.

"Eva Luckes wrote that people were becoming too self-seeking in 1909, which is good to explore in our self-centred times."

Denise Marshall