

= Holby City (series 1) =

The first series of the British medical drama television series *Holby City* commenced airing in the United Kingdom on BBC One on 12 January 1999 , and concluded on 9 March 1999 . The show was created by Mal Young and Tony McHale as a spin ? off from the BBC medical drama *Casualty* , intended to follow the treatment of patients from *Casualty* as they were transferred onto the hospital 's surgical wards . McHale served as the programme 's lead writer throughout the first series , which ran for nine episodes . Young cast actors who were already established names in the acting industry , particularly from a soap opera background . Several cast members shadowed real surgeons and nurses in preparation for their roles to increase the show 's realism . The series received mixed reviews from critics . It was compared favourably with *Casualty* , but received negative reviews in which it was contrasted poorly with the American medical drama *ER* . The series premiere attracted 10 @.@ 72 million viewers , falling to 8 @.@ 51 million by the series finale .

The series focuses on the hospital 's cardithoracic ward , Darwin . Department heads and consultant surgeons Anton Meyer (George Irving) and Muriel McKendrick (Phyllis Logan) clash frequently over patient care and division of beds . Tension arises between nurses Julie Fitzjohn (Nicola Stephenson) and Jasmine Hopkins (Angela Griffin) over the position of Darwin ward sister . Registrar Nick Jordan (Michael French) clashes professionally with his estranged wife Karen Newburn (Sarah Preston) , and pursues relationships with registrar Kirstie Collins (Dawn McDaniel) and theatre sister Ellie Sharpe (Julie Saunders) . Ward clerk Paul Ripley (Luke Mably) resigns after being caught kissing a comatose patient , and senior house officer Victoria Merrick (Lisa Faulkner) begins taking amphetamines to cope with the pressures of work . In the series finale , Jasmine is stabbed by thieves , and Nick endeavours to save her life in theatre .

= = Production = =

Holby City was created by Tony McHale and Mal Young as a spin ? off from the long ? running BBC medical drama *Casualty* . Young wanted to explore what happened to patients treated in *Casualty* once they were taken away to the hospital 's surgical wards . While *Casualty* 's scope is limited to " accident of the week " storylines about patients entering hospital , *Holby City* allowed the possibility of storylines about long ? term care , rather than immediate life and death decisions .

Although both shows are set in the same hospital , the *Casualty* set in Bristol was not large enough to encompass the surgical ward and operating theatre required for *Holby City* , so the series was produced at the BBC 's Elstree Studios in north London . As a result , some crossover scenes had to be shot twice , first on the *Casualty* set and then again at Elstree , with cast members travelling between the two locations . McHale wrote the series ' first episode , and served as the show 's lead writer . *Holby City* premiered on 12 January 1999 on BBC One . Its first series ran for nine episodes of 50 minutes in length , which were broadcast first in the 8 @.@ 10 pm , then 8 pm timeslot on Tuesdays .

= = Cast = =

= = = Overview = = =

The first series of *Holby City* featured an ensemble cast of characters in the medical profession , who worked on the hospital 's Darwin Ward . Phyllis Logan and George Irving played consultants Muriel McKendrick and Anton Meyer . Michael French and Dawn McDaniel appeared as registrars Nick Jordan and Kirstie Collins , while Lisa Faulkner played senior house officer Victoria Merrick . Sarah Preston and Angela Griffin played ward sisters Karen Newburn and Jasmine Hopkins . Nicola Stephenson appeared as nurse Julie Fitzjohn , and Ian Curtis played senior staff nurse Ray Sykes . Julie Saunders played theatre sister Ellie Sharpe , and Luke Mably appeared as ward clerk Paul Ripley . Logan , Saunders and Mably all departed from *Holby City* during the course of the series .

The series also included walk ? on performances by Casualty cast members , including Derek Thompson as nurse Charlie Fairhead , and guest appearances by characters first seen in Casualty , whose treatment was continued on Holby City .

In casting the first series of Holby City , Young ? who had previously worked on the soap operas Brookside and Family Affairs ? selected actors who were already established names in the acting industry , particularly from a soap opera background . French had starred in the BBC 's EastEnders , while Stephenson and Faulkner had starred in Brookside . Griffin had also appeared in ITV 's Coronation Street . Young explained : " Some of the best performances on screen have come out of soaps in the past few years . There is a fantastic amount of talent on those shows . "

Cast members observed the staff at real hospitals in preparation for their roles . Stephenson and Griffin spent time at Watford Hospital , where they underwent a crash course in nursing basics , including handling bed pans and learning to make beds with hospital corners . Irving observed coronary artery bypass surgery performed at Papworth and Middlesex Hospital , while French shadowed a consultant and registrar at Papworth Hospital , observing a heart bypass and lung biopsy procedure . Young explained that viewers believe in Casualty and trust the show to be realistic , and that he wanted Holby City to be the same in that regard .

= = = Regular cast = = =

Phyllis Logan as Mrs. Muriel McKendrick , Cardiology Consultant , Darwin
George Irving as Mr. Anton Meyer , Cardiothoracic Consultant , Darwin
Michael French as Mr. Nick Jordan , Cardiovascular Surgical Registrar , Darwin
Dawn McDaniel as Ms. Kristie Collins , Cardiothoracic Surgical Registrar , Darwin
Lisa Faulkner as Dr. Victoria Merrick , Senior House Officer , Cardiothoracic Surgery , Darwin
Angela Griffin as Jasmine Hopkins , Ward Sister , Darwin
Sarah Preston as Karen Newburn , Ward Sister , Darwin
Nicola Stephenson as Julie Fitzjohn , Staff Nurse , Darwin
Julie Saunders as Ellie Sharpe , Theatre Sister , Darwin
Luke Mably as Paul Ripley , Ward Clerk , Darwin
Ian Curtis as Ray Sykes , Senior Staff Nurse , Darwin

= = Reception = =

The series received mixed reviews from critics . Graham Keal of the Birmingham Post wrote of the first episode : " Heretical as it might seem , I liked Holby City more than Casualty , not least because the formula is so much more flexible and unpredictable . " Peter Paterson of the Daily Mail praised the series for breaking away from the " dreary sameness " of Casualty , and for presenting " a less hopeless view of the NHS . " His only concern about the series was its continuation of patient storylines from Casualty , writing : " if that happens too often , the new programme will soon lose its freshness and sparkle . " The Mirror 's Charlie Catchpole wrote that he was " sick of the sensitive , hand ? wringing , non ? judgmental do ? gooders who mope around the A & E department in Casualty " , praising in comparison the " pushy , ambitious , cynical and generally thoroughly unpleasant surgeons " in Holby City .

Sam Wollaston of The Guardian received the series positively , writing : " Holby City has everything you want from a hospital drama : good ? looking staff , a bit of love interest , a dishy doc , the odd current issue (no beds , badly ? paid nurses) and bits where you have to look away " , deeming it : " Pretty good , really . " Stan Hey of The Mail on Sunday observed that on the strength of the opening episode , the series ' success seemed " fairly assured " . He noted that : " characters are only skin ? deep as yet , being subsidiary to the plot , but a successful graft should be achieved during the series . " Kathleen Morgan of the Daily Record praised the casting of French and Griffin , writing : " It will take a couple of episodes before both actors shake off their soapy history , but with some decent plots and good lines , they should make the grade . " Morgan deemed Irving the star of the show , and commented : " With Irving in the driving seat , Holby City looks like it is on the right

track . "

Andrew Billen of the New Statesman also found Irving as Meyer the series ' " most compelling character " , though deemed Holby City mediocre and its storylines " safely unoriginal " . Billen compared Holby City negatively to the American medical drama ER , opining that the former show has a meandering pace in comparison to the latter 's briskness , and that ER has a higher calibre of actors . The Sunday Herald also compared the series unfavourably to ER , writing that Holby City served to highlight ER 's " true sophistication " . Morgan refuted these negative comparisons , however , writing that : " The sign of great drama is when a scriptwriter and director can make a symphony out of a few notes and Holby City 's creators have done that . It doesn 't have the budget of ER , but it is proving just as compelling . "

= = Episodes = =

" Episode # " refers to the episode 's number in the overall series , whereas " Series # " refers to the episode 's number in this particular series .