

= Queen Vic Fire Week =

" Queen Vic Fire Week " is a group of four episodes of the BBC soap opera EastEnders , broadcast between 6 and 10 September 2010 on BBC One . The episodes included a fire at The Queen Victoria public house , also known as The Queen Vic or The Vic , and the departure of the character Peggy Mitchell , portrayed by Barbara Windsor , who left the series after sixteen years in the role . During the episodes , Peggy ? the pub landlady ? has her crack cocaine @-@ addicted son Phil ( Steve McFadden ) imprisoned in The Queen Victoria , forcing him to go cold turkey . She later learns that her deceased husband Archie ( Larry Lamb ) was murdered by local resident Stacey Branning ( Lacey Turner ) . Before she can report Stacey to the police , Phil escapes and sets the pub on fire . Stacey and her infant daughter Lily are trapped inside , but are rescued by Ryan Malloy ( Neil McDermott ) , prompting Stacey to reveal to him that he is Lily 's father . The pub destroyed , Peggy decides against reporting Stacey for Lily 's sake . She plans to make a fresh start , bidding her family goodbye and leaving Walford .

The episodes were directed by Lee Salisbury and produced by Bryan Kirkwood . The first was written by Daran Little and the remainder by Simon Ashdown . Kirkwood intended to give Windsor an " epic and poignant " departure , as befitting her status as the ultimate EastEnders matriarch . The fire storyline was created for her exit , and to facilitate a refurbishment of The Queen Victoria set for the transition to high @-@ definition television broadcasting . The episodes were filmed over seventeen days , more than twice the series ' typical filming duration , with the interior set rebuilt on the George Lucas Stage in Elstree for the fire . A special version of the theme tune , called " Peggy 's Theme " , was created for Windsor 's final episode . It was released as an EP , available for download following the episode , and features as the lead track on composer Simon May 's album The Simon May Collection . The episodes were accompanied by two documentaries on BBC Three , one following the filming of the fire , and the other examining ten of Peggy 's most iconic moments in EastEnders .

Viewership ranged from 8 @.@ 60 ? 10 @.@ 09 million , with no episode watched by less than a third of the total viewing audience . They were the most watched programmes on BBC One in the week of broadcast , and the Friday episode was the second @-@ most watched show across all channels . The episodes received a mixed response from critics . Several highlighted inaccuracies and implausibilities in the storyline , including the lack of fire alarms and sprinklers in the pub . Others focussed on Peggy 's departure , with James McCarthy of the Western Mail writing that it would " doubtless remain the stuff of EastEnders ' legend for years to come , " and Jim Shelley calling it " a good way to go . " In contrast , the Daily Mirror 's Polly Hudson found Peggy 's exit a nonsensical " non event " , and Gareth McLean of The Guardian deemed it " suitably sentimental " , but several years overdue . The fire was nominated in the " Best Stunt " category at the 2011 All About Soap Bubble Awards .

= = Plot = =

= = = 6 September 2010 = = =

Peggy Mitchell ( Barbara Windsor ) , who has just regained her status as landlady of The Queen Victoria public house , decides to throw a wedding reception for Janine Butcher ( Charlie Brooks ) and Ryan Malloy ( Neil McDermott ) to let everyone know the pub is hers again . Peggy 's friend Pat Evans ( Pam St. Clement ) arranges a hen party for Janine at the R & R nightclub , but Janine feels betrayed by Pat when Peggy reveals that she said Janine 's marriage would not last . Janine meets a man named Richard Monroe ( Andrew Hall ) , who settles her bill . Impressed by his car , Janine leaves with him . Worried about her son Phil ( Steve McFadden ) because of his addiction to the drug crack cocaine , Peggy enlists the help of Minty Peterson ( Cliff Parisi ) and Billy Mitchell ( Perry Fenwick ) to abduct him from the flat he is living in . They bring him back to The Queen Victoria , locking him in the living room upstairs , where the windows have been boarded up to stop him from

escaping . Stacey Branning ( Lacey Turner ) reveals to Dot Branning ( June Brown ) that her deceased husband Bradley ( Charlie Clements ) is not the father of her baby Lily .

== = 7 September 2010 == =

Stacey explains to Dot that Bradley knew he was not Lily 's father . Dot informs Bradley 's father Max ( Jake Wood ) , who tells her he already knows . Concerned by Stacey telling people her secrets , he wonders if she has ceased taking medication for her bipolar disorder . He tells her that she needs to keep the truth about Lily 's father and the fact that she killed Peggy 's husband Archie ( Larry Lamb ) several months previously to herself . Phil tries to convince various people to let him out as he is suffering withdrawal symptoms , but nobody will . Janine awakens in Richard 's flat and gets dressed , though they did not have sex . She returns home and tells Pat that she feels guilty , and Pat tells her not to inform Ryan . Janine fears that she is not good enough for Ryan , but he reassures her and they marry . Stacey attends their wedding reception in The Queen Victoria , leaving Lily in a bedroom upstairs . She is surprised by a photograph of Peggy and Archie , and is frightened to hear Phil making noises in the living room . Stacey tells Peggy that she thinks Archie is alive and locked upstairs . Peggy assures Stacey that Archie is dead , telling her that Bradley killed him , as he was posthumously found guilty of the murder . Stacey then confesses that she killed Archie .

== = 9 September 2010 == =

Peggy demands that Stacey leave the pub and Stacey pleads with her not to call the police for Lily 's sake . She attempts to tell Ryan that he is Lily 's father , but is interrupted by Pat , who thinks Stacey is trying to seduce him and slaps her . Phil smashes through the door using a crowbar that was left in the room . He starts taking cash and drinking alcohol , and interrupts Peggy before she can call the police about Stacey . They argue , with Phil accusing Peggy of loving the pub more than she loves him and throwing a match to the alcohol @-@ soaked floor to start a fire . It spreads quickly , causing an explosion . The customers flee the pub , Syed Masood ( Marc Elliott ) is knocked to the ground and trampled in the process but is rescued by his father Masood Ahmed ( Nitin Ganatra ) and brother Tamwar ( Himesh Patel ) .

Peggy tries in vain to extinguish the flames , but is forced out by her friends and family . Stacey , unaware of the events , heads upstairs to Lily and becomes trapped . She uses the crowbar to smash a boarded @-@ up window and hands Lily over to Ryan , who has climbed a ladder . Peggy realises Phil is still inside and returns to the building with Billy . They find him trapped beneath a wooden beam , and are able to drag him out to safety . Ryan goes back up the ladder and carries an unconscious Stacey out . Stacey regains consciousness and sees that Lily is safe , and tells Ryan that Lily is his daughter . Peggy stares at the pub as it is completely destroyed .

== = 10 September 2010 == =

The next day , Peggy visits Stacey in hospital and asks her to confess to burning the pub , as a sentence for arson would be less than one for murder , but Stacey refuses . Peggy realises that Stacey needs to look after her daughter so she leaves . Ryan confronts Stacey at the hospital , shocked with her confession , refuses to acknowledge his daughter , and goes on his honeymoon with Janine . Peggy goes into the pub and looks around as she remembers events from her time there . She then tells Billy she wants to take Phil away to make a fresh start and to protect him . Her niece Ronnie ( Samantha Womack ) tells Peggy she is five months pregnant and asks Peggy not to leave as she is like a mother to her . Peggy tells Ronnie to give her real mother , Glenda ( Glynis Barber ) , another chance . Peggy 's daughter Sam ( Danniiella Westbrook ) does not want her to leave as Peggy promised to look after Sam 's baby Richard for her , however , Peggy says she is old now and the baby needs a strong mother . Peggy gives her jewellery to Sam to sell so she has some money . Peggy speaks to Phil , accepting responsibility for making him the way he is and

offering to help him get off the drugs . He says she needs him more than he needs her and that she suffocates him . Realising that he is right , Peggy asks the rest of her family to look after him , saying emotional goodbyes . Though Phil claims not to have meant what he said , Peggy says she has to leave for his sake . As she leaves the house , Phil begins to follow her , but she sends him back inside . She looks at the pub and walks out of Walford .

= = Background = =

In October 2009 , actress Barbara Windsor 's decision to leave EastEnders after sixteen years of portraying the character Peggy Mitchell was announced . The show 's executive producer , Bryan Kirkwood , said it was a massive honour for him to be responsible for the character 's exit , but explained that as she has become the " quintessential matriarch of the show " , they had to get the exit storyline right , which he said would be " both epic and poignant " . Windsor gave one year 's notice of leaving , giving the production team time to come up with a storyline , and was asked to keep her decision a secret until the announcement was made . Kirkwood looked at Windsor 's first episode and decided her exit should be about Peggy and her son Phil , as Peggy 's arrival came at a time when Phil needed her most , and since then , she had believed that Phil still needed her . Peggy 's exit came when she realised his mother was not what Phil needed . Windsor did not want to know in advance how her character would leave , but hoped she would not be killed off . She commented : " My exit was beautifully written and I really couldn't have asked for a better send @-@ off for Peggy . "

In June 2010 , it was announced that The Queen Victoria would be destroyed in a fire to tie in with EastEnders ' transition to high definition so the set could be completely refurbished . It was reported that the fire could tie in with the departure of Peggy or one of the several other characters whose departure had previously been announced . Director Lee Salisbury said the fire , as well as Peggy 's departure , would have a huge effect on several characters , especially the Mitchell family , of which Peggy is the matriarch . Kirkwood said the fire was " one of the most spectacular stunts that EastEnders has ever seen , and it 's very exciting . "

= = Production = =

= = = Filming = = =

All four episodes were directed by Lee Salisbury , who learned three weeks before filming that he would be working on the episodes , and said he was " a bit dumbstruck " to discover he would be directing the fire episodes and Windsor 's departure , but that he was proud to do so . He said his main aim for the fire was to show the fear , panic and pandemonium that comes when a fire starts and quickly spreads . He wanted the story to be character @-@ led rather than led by the fire , saying that the fire " almost becomes a backdrop " . Salisbury said it was hard to make the fire look real because " you can 't actually set fire to stuff " . As the fire lasted for some time , characters ' scenes could be divided up into small sections . Salisbury commented : " Bryan Kirkwood , the writer [ Ashdown ] and myself also wanted it to be an episode where things kept happening and the audience would keep thinking , ' Wow , that must have been the explosion ' or ' That must have been the stunt ' . But more things keep happening and happening , and I think that 's what people will find really shocking . " The production team had several production meetings for the weeks ' worth of episodes , whereas there is usually just one .

The episodes took seventeen days to film , where normally crew are given eight days to film a week 's worth of episodes . Between forty and forty @-@ five members of crew were required for filming the fire episode , including assistant directors , a design department , cameras , lighting , sound , make up , costume , visual effects , fire safety officers and a stunt team consisting of a stunt co @-@ ordinator and stunt doubles . Filming was done with four television cameras , a steadicam and a dolly . The exterior fire scenes were filmed first , in five night shoots lasting until 4 a.m. , and the

real exterior set was burnt . Safety was the top priority for the fire scenes , and fire safety advisors ensured all cast and crew were protected . Stunt doubles wore flame @-@ proof gel on their faces and for the scene where Ryan and Stacey fall from the ladder , several layers of cardboard boxes were stacked on the ground for the stunt doubles to fall onto . For filming the final explosion scene , all the actors whose characters were involved were filmed separately for their reactions . The explosion had to be delayed due to a power failure at Elstree Studios , two minutes before the explosion was due to be set off , which also affected a live broadcast of Big Brother . The power cut lasted two hours and filming was further delayed due to rain . The explosion was completed in a third take . Despite the delay , the scenes were completed on schedule . Salisbury noted that the demise of such an iconic set as The Queen Victoria left several cast members in tears .

The interior set of The Queen Victoria pub was taken apart and rebuilt exactly to scale on the George Lucas Stage , a fire stage at Elstree Film Studios , for interior scenes , filmed over four days . The interior set took seven weeks to build and two weeks to get into the studio . Controlled gas pipes were used to shoot jets of flames and a header was specially built to collapse on Phil . Salisbury had to ensure that the fire for the interior scenes matched that of the already @-@ filmed exterior scenes . Producers decided to extend the 10 September episode featuring Peggy 's departure by ten minutes , meaning it would clash with rival soap opera Coronation Street .

In 2016 , Windsor said that the Queen Vic fire was her favourite stunt to film since joining the cast in 1994 . She called it her " Joan of Arc moment " and revealed that when the explosion happened , she " was actually blown off my feet and landed on Steve McFadden who ended up with bruised ribs " .

== Theme music ==

Windsor 's final episode on 10 September 2010 did not end with the usual EastEnders theme tune . Instead the occasionally used " Julia 's Theme " , a piano version of the theme , was reworked specially for the broadcast , and given the name " Peggy 's Theme " . The theme was created by the original theme tune composer , Simon May , who was reportedly thrilled to write the theme tune for Windsor . He added more piano to the theme and gave it a " more melancholy feel " . May composed the theme not knowing what would happen on screen , but when Kirkwood brought a rough edit of the episode , May noted that the music fitted perfectly first time , saying it was " remarkable and very moving . " The theme features as the lead track on the album The Simon May Collection and was also released as an EP available to download immediately after the episode . He revealed : " All the actors and crew had made a really special couple of shows . My main purpose was to bring something to the table , and I didn 't think it would be a single . [ ... ] But when everybody heard the track they said ' you 've got to release that as the single because it 's something special ' . "

== Related media ==

A number of trailers were released to television in August 2010 to promote Peggy 's departure from the series , and a section on the official EastEnders website was dedicated to the character , allowing fans to " heart Peggy " . The 10 September episode was followed by a twenty @-@ minute episode of documentary programme EastEnders Revealed titled " Peggy Mitchell : Queen of the Vic " . Narrated by Shane Richie , the documentary looked at ten moments from Peggy 's time in the show that made her a British icon . According to overnight figures , it received ratings of 4 @.@ 49 million viewers . Official ratings raised the figure to 4 @.@ 62 million . A documentary looking at the filming of the fire was broadcast on 24 September 2010 on BBC Three . It received 800 @, @ 000 viewers .

== Reception ==

### === Ratings ===

The 6 September episode , featuring Janine 's hen party , attracted 9 @. @ 54 million viewers on BBC One . It was watched by 36 @. @ 1 % of television viewers during its original broadcast . The later BBC Three repeat was viewed by 840 @, @ 000 people , attaining a 3 @. @ 9 % share of the audience during broadcast . The 7 September episode , in which Stacey confessed to Peggy that she killed Archie , was viewed by 8 @. @ 60 million people on BBC One and 990 @, @ 000 on BBC Three , with audience shares of 34 @. @ 9 % and 4 @. @ 7 % respectively . The fire episode on 9 September received 9 @. @ 40 million viewers and a 41 % share of the audience , and the BBC Three repeat saw 1 @. @ 59 million viewers ( 7 @. @ 4 % ) tuning in . Peggy 's departure on 10 September received 10 @. @ 09 million viewers for BBC One , a 38 @. @ 1 % share during broadcast , and the later BBC Three repeat was watched by 1 @. @ 16 million viewers , attaining a 5 @. @ 3 % share . Additionally , the four episodes were the most @-@ watched programmes on BBC One that week and the Friday episode was the second most @-@ watched on all channels .

### === Critical response ===

The fire and Peggy 's exit episodes garnered a mixed reception by critics . Liam Tucker , founder of website Watch With Mothers , compared the fire episode to the film The Texas Chain Saw Massacre and admired the special effects and performances of the episode , but said that it seemed unlikely that everyone would have escaped safely , especially Stacey and her baby . Roz Laws from the Sunday Mercury wondered if the fire episode was inaccurate due to the lack of fire alarms , sprinklers and emergency lighting in the pub , but noted that the episode 's use of the song " Murder on the Dancefloor " , featuring the line " Gonna burn this god damn house right down " , was " clever " . A writer for Heat said " We knew the Vic fire was coming , but actually seeing it was quite another thing , and knowing that it also marked the end of an era with the departure of Barbra [ sic ] Windsor made it that much more emotional . " A reporter for the Nottingham Evening Post wrote " Never in the history of soap fires , of which there have of course been legion , have so many hilariously overindulgent explosions been captured on camera . " The Mail on Sunday picked the fire episode as the " Soap of the Day " , while The People deemed the lack of deaths " a wasted opportunity . " Ally Ross wrote in his column in The Sun that the fire episode was " twenty minutes of shouting " , questioned why one character was seen flouting the smoking ban and Phil was boarded up behind an inward @-@ opening door , and opined that he was glad to see Peggy leave as she had become " increasingly psychotic " and " vile " .

Writing for entertainment news website Digital Spy , Daniel Kilkelly said Peggy 's final episode featured " plenty of poignant moments [ ... ] ? not least the scene which saw Peggy standing in the destroyed Queen Vic and appearing completely devastated . " Gareth McLean from The Guardian said the use of " Peggy 's Theme " was a " suitably sentimental sendoff " for the character , but said that " in hindsight , Peggy should have left Walford three or four years ago , her character trapped in a cycle of increasingly samey stories that reduced her to a parody of her former self " , describing her efforts to put out the flames as " like a very sooty clockwork mouse " . James McCarthy of Welsh newspaper Western Mail said Windsor 's " final emotional scene will doubtless remain the stuff of EastEnders ' legend for years to come , " and Jim Shelley from the Daily Mirror said " It was a good way to go . " However , Shelley 's colleague Polly Hudson said Peggy 's exit was a " non event " , as " Peggy just left , nonsensically and at complete odds with everything we 've learnt about her character over the last 15 years . "

In February 2011 , the fire was nominated for ' Best Stunt ' at the 2011 All About Soap Bubble Awards . In May , it was nominated for ' Spectacular Scene of the Year ' at the 2011 British Soap Awards . In 2015 , Inside Soap listed the Queen Vic fire as their 9th favourite soap opera stunt of all time , saying it was " just smoke and mirrors ? we wanted proper carnage ! "

### === Impact ===

The London Fire Brigade used the "dramatic and distressing" events of EastEnders to publicly highlight the devastation a real fire can cause, urging viewers to be more aware of how to protect themselves.