



★  
Stacey's  
**STARRING  
ROLE**  
*(behind the camera)*

**STACEY BURROWS** is playing a major part in bringing Yorkshire's young talent to a big-screen audience

WORDS: Ann Chadwick

**Y**orkshire: It's a location for impossible missions with Tom Cruise to zombie attacks with Cillian Murphy. Film and TV has taken Yorkshire as a brand round the world, and one woman in Bradford is playing a key part in Yorkshire's starring role: Stacey Burrows. What's more, her life has the air of a feel-good movie.

Stacey, 35, went to primary school in Shipley and secondary school in Guiseley. Her dad worked as a printer at a printing company in Shipley. They later decided to move to Menston, where Stacey's mum continued her career as a registered childminder.

Stacey was academic, but struggled with speaking in front of the class.

'The teacher often asked students to read a few lines out loud and when it was my turn to speak, my heart would race. I would stutter over my words and panic,' she explains. 'I have always been brought up to believe that anyone can do anything, so I took up a drama class to push myself out of my comfort zone. The more you do something, the easier it becomes.'

Stacey did A-level law and went on to study it at Durham University. She kept facing her fear head-on and trained for a career that demanded excellent public speaking skills: a barrister.

'Standing up and having to think on the spot, I really came into my own. As soon as I was called to the bar at Lincoln's Inn in London, I got a job in Manchester doing county court advocacy in 2012.'

She wanted to help other young people who struggled. 'I thought one evening a week, I want to give something back, and set up a public speaking club for children.'

CBBC saw her website, and got in touch. Some of her students on the course were used as extras. As the CBBC team moved onto different shows, they came back to Stacey for her talented kids.

By 2013, she had launched Articulate Agency as a hobby. But the 'sideline' grew. She had to employ staff and went full time, moving into offices in Baildon in 2018.

'Leaving a career in law was a big leap into the unknown. I took a risk, but it's a risk that paid off,' she says.

Articulate Agency has two strands – a drama school, with classes across the whole of Yorkshire (including Harrogate, Ilkley, Bradford, and South Yorkshire), and the acting agency, based in Baildon in Bradford, which represents young people from across the UK. It specialises in young actors aged three to 25. They're approached by all the major casting directors. The agency helps young talent hone audition tapes, as well as prepare for final casting. Stacey uses her legal skills to negotiate favourable contracts and her agency offers an umbrella of care in a notoriously competitive industry.

The welfare of her young talent is paramount.

'On film sets, you'll often see children in their own private trailer with a chaperone and they're privately tutored. There are even runners who will bring them food and drinks and often walk around with them holding an umbrella over their heads,' Stacey says. 'Returning to an ordinary life of school can be a big change. Our drama classes are taught by industry professionals, who know what it's like to live in both worlds. They talk to the children about that, and how to manage it. Unlike most agencies, we have drop-ins on Zoom for young performers who want to have a chat. We also have a mental health first-aider.'

For parents – or kids – who go into it for fame or money, Stacey has a reality check.

'We do get parents who see what our kids are achieving on social media and say to us, I want my child to be >

**left:** Stacey Burrows, principal of acting school and casting agency Articulate, based in Baildon. Photo: Tony Johnson



**above:** Filming *Gentleman Jack* in York  
**right:** Little Germany in Bradford – the streets were used in filming *Peaky Blinders*

famous. We always encourage our children they should never want to be famous. Instead, do what you love – that’s the most important thing. Often when this happens, the right kind of recognition follows.’

But when it comes to money, it’s not the usual few quid earned from washing cars to supplement pocket money.

‘It does happen that a child earns enough to buy a house. When they turn 16, they can earn a lot, but it can happen for younger ones if they are lucky enough to have a string of high-level jobs. But for the majority, starting out in children’s television, for example, the pay can be less than adult minimum wage.’

Articulate recommends children spend only 20 per cent of their income. ‘Whilst protecting income in a trust fund is not a regulation here, it is in America. We don’t want children to squander their money, so we always suggest the other 80 per cent should be saved in an ISA or similar until they’re 16 or 18, depending on the parents’ judgement.’

Going back to Stacey’s own film-plot life story, Articulate Agency is now Yorkshire’s leading acting agency, and employs 10 full-time staff and 12 freelancers. Throwing in some romance, she met her now partner, Paul, a first assistant director, on the set of *Gentleman Jack*.

‘I would speak to him on the phone about shows our clients were cast on, like *Ackley Bridge*, which is filmed in Halifax, but it wasn’t until we met in 2019 on the set of *Gentleman Jack* that we discovered there was a spark. Paul has worked on about 50 dramas, including *Death in Paradise* and *Line of Duty*. He’s the one who shouts “Action” on the floor.’

They had a baby, Clementine, in 2022. As the printing industry started to decline, Stacey’s father decided to take voluntary redundancy and joined his wife in their childcare business, where they care for their granddaughter when Stacey and Paul are at work.

The pair show how Yorkshire is home to a vibrant TV and film industry. She saw a boom after Covid, but said the demand began before that, thanks to Yorkshire’s diversity.

‘The jaw-dropping Dales are a beautiful backdrop for shows like *All Creatures Great & Small* and movies such as *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, filmed at Malhamdale. We have an abundance of incredible stately homes – Castle Howard, for example, has hosted *Bridgerton*. Parts of Yorkshire’s cities are becoming more cosmopolitan, and there are a lot of suburbs, perfect for telling gritty stories such as *Happy Valley*, set in Calderdale, which starred five of my children and young performers.’

Disney’s *The Fully Monty* was filmed in south Yorkshire’s suburbs and starred an Articulate teenager in a leading child role. Stacey added: ‘Little Germany in Bradford is a wonderful part of the city and we often see the streets transformed, taking us back in time. Our kids have filmed shows there, like *Peaky Blinders* and *Gentleman Jack*, often with SFX such as smoke machines and street fires. That’s not even mentioning the beautiful East Coast and Brontë country.’

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## ONES TO WATCH Meet Yorkshire’s rising stars

### Matilda Firth, nine, from Cleckheaton

Matilda joined Articulate at four. Stacey says: ‘Sshe developed the skills of physicalising emotions and role play

much earlier than many of her peers. She landed her first commercial, then TV, and now it’s films and major TV projects.’

She is in Sky TV’s *Christmas Carole*, Disney’s *Disenchanted*, and ITV’s *Mr Bates vs Post Office*, plus films *Subservience* and *Wolf Man*.



### Austin Haynes, 16, Leeds

Stacey says: ‘I met Austin when he was seven. He is one of the UK’s rising stars. This year he has had seven cast speaking roles, to be released next year.’

Roles include: MGM’s *The Boys in the Boat* (directed by George Clooney), BBC’s *The Responder*, and Channel 4’s *Somewhere Boy*. Austin is also in a major BBC feature, due for release in 2025.



### Tilly Kaye, 13, Kirkclee

Stacey says: ‘Tilly started acting aged five and stars in many adult TV shows including *Gentleman*

*Jack* and *Last Tango in Halifax*. When she was 10, she landed the title role of Biff in *Biff & Chip* (CBeebies). Her most exciting role yet is in an ITV series, *Protection*, starring Siobhan Finneran. The show has not aired yet, but Tilly is phenomenal in it.’



### Yousef Naseer, 19, Bradford

Stacey says: ‘He was nine at his first drama class. I quickly recognised his natural talent and found him an

audition for a popular US TV series called *Tyrant*, which aired on FOX. Ever since, he has worked on a host of shows, including *Strike Back* (for Sky), *The Dumping Ground* (BBC), *The Bay* (ITV), and the upcoming TV series *Virdee*.



### Chiamaka Ulebor, 14, Leeds

Stacey says: ‘ChiChi has filmed on the BBC’s *Waterloo*

*Road* for the past three years as a key character, Shola Aku, who always fights for what is right. Her character is often seen facing difficult issues which she executes perfectly on screen.



### Lucy Chambers, 17, Otley

Stacey says: ‘Lucy came to us when she was in primary school and she is now a thriving actress. Lucy’s first credit was

playing Chloe Tuckman in *Viewpoint*, which set her up for her next role in series two of the kids TV sci-fi series *Silverpoint*.’

Lucy is in series 5 of *The Bay* (ITV) and the BBC series *The Listeners*. She has recently been filming for a popular TV series.





**above:** Staz Nair as Harry Virdee and AA Dhand, creator, writer and executive producer of *Virdee*, which was filmed in Bradford last year. Photo: BBC Pictures

**below:** Writer Sally Wainwright at Shibden Hall. Photo: NQ

Stacey also puts the boom down to the incredible creative talent in Yorkshire.

'As well as Sally Wainwright OBE and the late Kay Mellor OBE, there's a lot of other writers coming through from Yorkshire, like Bradford's AA Dhand (the BBC's adaption of his detective series, *Virdee*, was filmed last year), and Kay Mellors' production company, Rollem Productions, have an eye for spotting emerging writing talent.'

She's adamant you don't need to be in London to work on national, or even Hollywood projects; everything is done by Zoom, calls, and emails.

'I love Yorkshire, I love everything about it. We walk in the Dales a lot. It's a great place to bring up a child and if I can work from anywhere in the UK, why would I not choose Yorkshire?

'Since Covid and the economic crisis, people stay in more, so good TV is really important, as an escape from



reality and a way to unwind. With so many streaming platforms competing for subscriptions, producing a high volume of quality TV is important.'

Articulate Agency is playing a role in breaking down traditional barriers to the performing arts, where 65 per cent are from middle- or upper-class backgrounds, and just 16 per cent are from working class communities. Kids can join Articulate drama classes for just £8 a week, and it offers a number of free scholarships.

'The majority of our students are from working class backgrounds, and are showing the world that anything is possible. There's something special about supporting children through the industry when they've not come from privilege. The opportunities can be life changing.'

The skills learned through acting can be used anywhere, even if they decide against adult careers in the industry. 'Remembering lines means your memory muscle gets stronger. Script reading offers development in emotional intelligence and comprehension. You need commitment and resilience for when you get knock-backs, which happens throughout our lives. The young adults we produce are resilient, strong and determined individuals, who are excellent communicators and have the confidence to perform in front of a 90-strong crew.'

2025 is set to be a big year. Stacey's clients are in shows that are under non-disclosure agreements, but feature Hollywood A-listers, with some of the hottest and most anticipated film and TV shows set for release.

Articulate is the north's leading agency for children, and in the Top 10 national child and young performer agencies. So, what's next?

As the agency has been going for 10 years, and most of its clients are children, Stacey does expect some to grow up to be household names.

'My ambition is to keep bringing in the next generation of raw talent and nurturing it, but I'd also love to retain my young adults, expand the team and take on more adults.'

For Yorkshire, the future looks starry. ●