

ENTER FLETCH THE FLETCH

Jim Fletcher (Gerard Maguire) was introduced as the new no nonsense Deputy Governor, instantly putting Vera Bennet's nose of joint as she is demoted to pave the way for him. Vera would always resent his presence from that moment. Although they would go on to become good friends even saintly Meg found ex-Army man Jim hard to take initially with his strict ways and tough line with discipline. Eventually a softer side of Jim would emerge, a more compassionate side, especially when it came to the older Wentworth residents such as Lizzie Birdsworth and



Edith Wharton and aged social worker Agnes Forster. Jim had a volatile relationship with his family life and we would follow Jim's journey to accepting his marriage was over and his eventual separation. Shortly after Jim's arrival he meets up with his old friend Geoff Butler (Ray Meagher in his first of three roles on the show) who ends up briefly dating Meg Jackson. Geoff is hiding a secret, he was a dangerous and violent man with homophobic tendencies who had beaten a man in a bar who had tried to make a pass at him. When Meg tried to call off her relationship with Geoff he turned on her and attacked her. A court case would see Geoff walk away with nothing more than a

good behaviour bond but he was hell bent on getting his own back on Jim who he held responsible for his near downfall. In a shocking act of revenge Geoff would send a parcel bomb to Jim but it would instead fall into the hands of his children and estranged wife Leila (Penny Ramsey – daughter of Lois Ramsey A.K.A inmate Ettie Parslow) and it exploded killing Jim's family and leaving him devastated.

Gerard Maguire admits to being in the right place at the right time when landing the role of Jim Fletcher. Gerard had very little experience in TV and was keen to do more so he went cap in hand to his old friend Ian Bradley (Prisoner's Producer) and asked for a role in the show. It came at a time when it was felt a male presence in the show would be a good thing to shake things up. Gerard was a fan of Sheila Florance before starting work on Prisoner and luckily she was also a fan of his from his theatre work and the pair became great friends offset with a mutual respect for each other which was not always the case amongst the cast. Gerard also remembers working with Val Lehman with great fondness and appreciated the work she regularly did behind the scenes to improve pay and conditions for those working on the show.

Much further down the line Gerard would decide that he was riding high on his success in Prisoner and thought the grass might be greener, and certainly better paid, elsewhere but his hand was forced when he clashed with the show's new producer John McCrae on more than one occasion, Gerard had sealed Jim's fate as he was let go from the series as of episode 254. Gerard was never given the opportunity to reprise the role, had an offer been made he would have accepted.

