

purelifestyle

# My favourite things



**Writer and university worker Helen Finnan shares her inside knowledge of the High Peak village of Hayfield, where she grew up...**

**HELEN FINNAN HAS LIVED IN THE HIGH PEAK MOST OF HER LIFE. BORN IN GLOSSOP, SHE LATER MOVED WITH HER MUM AND GRAN TO LITTLE HAYFIELD WHERE SHE LIVED FOR EIGHT YEARS UNTIL STARTING UNIVERSITY.**

**SHE STUDIED FOR A BA IN ENGLISH LITERATURE AT CHESTER, THEN GAINED AN MA IN POETRY AT DURHAM UNIVERSITY. SHE ALSO SPENT SOME TIME LIVING AND STUDYING IN CANADA AND AUSTRALIA.**

**HELEN NOW LIVES IN BUXTON WHERE SHE WORKS IN THE LIBRARY AT DERBY UNIVERSITY. SHE ENJOYS SWIMMING, PLAYS THE FLUTE AND IS CURRENTLY LEARNING ITALIAN.**

It was during my teenage years that I fell in love with Hayfield and its surrounding countryside.

It will always have a special place in my heart – so I was very excited when, in 2013, it became the location for BBC One drama *The Village*, which ran for two series, starring John Simm and Maxine Peake.

And I was a part of it too... I auditioned to become an extra

and was really excited to be one of only a handful of locals chosen.

I spent about eight days filming in and around Hayfield. It was an early start each day, I had to be on set at 7am. First my hair was curled and pinned, then I had minimal make-up applied. I sat next to Maxine Peake in a make-up trailer one afternoon between scenes, and she was lovely: very down to earth and chatty.

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Forget visions of swanky changing rooms – we had four makeshift cubicles made of poles with bin bags stretched across them for curtains!

All the women had to wear corsets to mirror the style of the period and they were put on extremely tightly. We would finish filming between 7-9pm so they were long days. We shot around two or three scenes a day, depending on how long and how many actors were in them. Sometimes the extras were just sitting around for two or three hours, waiting to be called, so I got to know the others quite well.

One of my favourite scenes, filmed at the cricket club, was a wheelbarrow race – that was fun. Then a more sombre scene where some of the female extras walked from near Hayfield library, towards the greengrocers, to check the board and see if our husbands had been killed in action.

It was really exciting to be involved with the show, but even more exciting to witness my village being turned back in time to pre-war England, with fictional signs being put up above actual businesses, and the tarmac being removed from the roads. It really did look amazing with all the cameras positioned around the streets.

One of the reasons Hayfield was chosen as the location was its stunning countryside. The hills in which the village is nestled are beautiful. If you walk to the top of the Lantern Pike, you are met with a panoramic view overlooking

Hayfield, Little Hayfield and further into the distance. When the heather is flowering in late summer, you can see carpets of purple all over the hills. This is one of my favourite places and I used to hike up it all the time when I was younger.

As the heather fades towards autumn, another of my favourite events takes place – the annual September sheepdog trials at Spray House Farm.

There is a whole host of events across the Saturday and Sunday including a fell race, shire horse displays and falconry. There are craft and food marquees, a beer tent, dancing and live music. There are also charity stalls and of course the sheepdog trials. It is always a fantastic weekend, and I highly recommend going if you have the chance!

It is the people and the spectacular scenery around Hayfield that makes the place so special. These events and places are just some of the reasons that I think it's such a great place to live and to visit. For such a small village, there's lots to see and get involved with all year round.

I spend a lot of time outdoors and I love walking. One of my favourites is along the Sett Valley trail from Hayfield to New Mills, especially at this time of year when the bluebells are flowering. The trail follows the track of the old railway line and is very flat, so it's an easy walk for all ages.

Something else I'm looking forward to right now is the May Queen



festival, which celebrates its 90th anniversary on May 13. It's said to be the longest-running event of its kind in the country. Hundreds of people line the streets to watch the procession of bands, performers, classic vehicles and floats. The crowning of the May Queen takes place on the school field where there is also a fun fair. I won my pet goldfish there one year and I love it; I always try and go, even if it rains.

Later in the year there are the well dressings, a tradition unique to Derbyshire. I'm fascinated by the intricate designs created with fresh flowers, and I enjoy walking round the village to see them all.

These days I live in Buxton – another place I've loved all my life. My secondary school prom was held at the Palace Hotel and during my A' levels I worked at the Pavilion Gardens. Now I'm based at the Dome, where I work with students as part of the library team ■

