

Once she lived on a bleak, isolated farm — now the undaunted Daleswoman who captured the heart of the nation is learning to cope with life in her cosy, all-mod-cons, country cottage

A blizzard raged at Low Birk Hatt Farm, 1000ft up in the Yorkshire Dales, as Hannah Hauxwell led her white cow out of the storm into its shed.

Two members of the TV film crew shielded the camera from the snow with their sheepskin coats, while another held the tripod steady by lying flat out in the drift.

Soon, sheep became buried in snow, and the production team's equipment was lifted out by helicopter. The crew had to make their own way out, following 5ft-high posts along a seven-mile route to the nearest road. At some points, just 18 inches of post was visible. The team found a welcoming pub with a fire and warming whisky.

They left behind them a woman who had endured worse conditions than this for almost half a century in Baldersdale. It was a harsh existence, battling against the elements and living without electricity and running water.

Hannah Bayles Tallentire Hauxwell had led an isolated life since her uncle's death in 1961. She often saw no one for two weeks at a time and lived on less than £300 a year.

When producer-director Barry Cockcroft's documentary *Too Long a Winter* was broadcast in 1973, the public response was overwhelming. ITV companies around the country received hundreds of phone calls and bulging sacks of mail, containing gifts and money for 'the old lady in the Yorkshire Dales'.

The 'old lady' was, in fact, 46. Years of hardship had taken their toll, and her hair was shocking white. But Hannah's gift of articulating her simple life entranced people around the world.

Last October, TV viewers saw Hannah's emotional departure from the farm she had worked alone for almost 30 years. Suffering angina and failing eyesight, she had decided to leave Low Birk Hatt after endless pleading by friends, who were growing increasingly worried about whether she could survive another harsh winter.

'It was necessary for her welfare, but difficult for her,' says Barry Cockcroft, one of those who urged

Today's home comforts



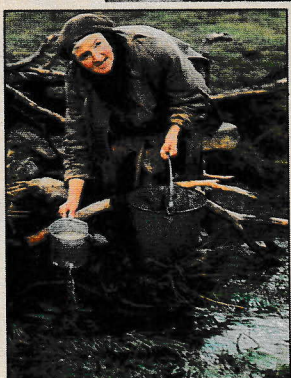
Hannah and Tim, the Jack Russell, are thrilled with their new home comforts. Running water and a bathroom are still a luxury (right)



Hardy Hannah comes in from the cold



Tough days on the farm



Leaving the farm and the cattle was a wrench for Hannah, even though she had to fetch water from a stream and weeks could go by without her seeing a soul



her to give up the farm. 'No one who saw her on the day she left — this pale, stricken figure sitting in an empty, echoing house — could fail to be moved.'

Barry's second documentary, *A Winter Too Many*, finished with Hannah leaving the farm in a removal lorry just before Christmas 1988, as the snows were coming again. Since then, she has begun a new chapter in her life, in the small cottage she bought in the nearby village of Cotherstone in Durham.

The demands of fame have left Hannah very little time to sort out the piles of belongings cluttered

around her new home. As well as two TV appearances on *Wogan* last year, Hannah had a best-selling autobiography, *Seasons of my Life*, written with Barry Cockcroft. She is still getting requests for signing sessions at bookshops throughout northern England.

The move has been both traumatic and a relief. 'It's been a blessing and a curse,' says Hannah, 63. 'I didn't like the thought of leaving the farm and the cattle. Nobody had lived in that house, apart from my family.'

'I never went to bed the night before moving. I was still clearing out cupboards and drawers. Even then, there were things left, and it was difficult returning later because I had always thought it was best to walk away and not go back.'

'You can't spend the best part of 60 years of your life in one place

and not miss it, though I always thought it would be nice to have a bathroom and hot and cold water.'

'But moving into the cottage didn't seem funny, being on the main street with people all round. I miss a bit of ground of my own.'

'The saving grace has been the book. People have come to the house, asking me to sign it, and I've been travelling to signing sessions a lot. That's been very enjoyable.'

In Cotherstone, Hannah has found friendly neighbours. She has joined an over-60s club and attends the Methodist chapel.

Home comforts are something that Hannah is quickly becoming accustomed to, although she hasn't yet mastered the washing machine given to her by a friend. Because her kitchen is still cluttered, she has been unable to position it properly near the sink, so she continues

to wash by hand. 'It's nice to have hot and cold water, instead of going out to the tank or collecting it from the stream or reservoir in a cow pail and boiling it,' she says. 'That was hard work.'

'The bathroom is an absolute luxury. At the farm, I had just an earth toilet outside.'

'Central heating makes everything very cosy, and the house is quite sheltered. I can hear the wind blowing down the chimney, which is a nice sound, but I don't feel the cold until I get outside.'

Hannah shops in the village, which means simply walking across the road. It is a welcome change from the monthly trek across two fields to get groceries left for her in a barn.

Public transport is something Hannah rarely has cause to use. Her publishers arrange a car to take her to book-signings.

The frequent phone calls and visitors are an ironic contrast to the lonely life Hannah led just a short time ago.

'When I didn't see many people,' she recalls, 'it made my day to speak to the walkers along the Pennine Way. After the first film, people came to visit. It was very nice and totally unexpected.'

Another result of the documentary was the installation of electricity at the farm — a remarkable achievement considering its distance from the nearest road.

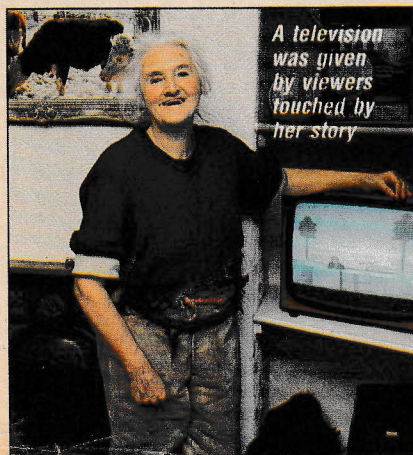
Public donations ensured that Hannah no longer had problems paying her £5 weekly grocery bill, and a television introduced a new dimension to her life, but keeping the farm was increasingly difficult. One winter was so cold that snow on her back turned to sheet ice.

'Summer, though, was heaven. I always say that in winter I existed and summer I lived.'

Now, she is looking forward to the future. That includes another book she is writing with Barry Cockcroft, due to be published next year. It will bring her story up to date and reveal more about her family's fascinating history in a remote community.

Fans and attention have left Hannah's ego untainted. 'I don't see myself as a star at all,' she says. 'I'm just a plain Daleswoman and happen to be very lucky. Until the day I die, I'll be grateful that Barry Cockcroft walked into my life.'

Anthony Hayward



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Unit of current	Sign	Existed	Payment	Musical sounds	Shade	Scope
	Keep			Feast		
			Roster			Microbe
Go wrong		Dusk	Tax			
Mock		Soar				
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Edam e.g.	Wig (4-5)	Paradise	Sampler			
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			Luke-warm	Respect	Bridge	Paw
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Plunge				Snake		Fresh
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Tear			Aerial	Formed		
Gem	Horse	Dried grape				Skill
		Mumble				
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Explode			Wogan?			
			Body part			
Feline					Consumed	
Money owing			Female sheep			
			Napkin			Check accounts
			Relax			
Grow	Topical film	Bond man!			Paddle	
					Sister	
					Chum	
Toffees?	Make last	Peeper cover!	Did wrong	Drunkard	Aptitude	Weed
				Material		
				Lawley?		
TV source			Keep apart			
			Brazil?		Used to be	Speak
			Fuss			
Gratis	Country path			Direction		
				Suez?		
Live	Extinct bird			Eye sore		

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HOW TO ENTER

The clues are on the squares. Write your answers following the directions of the arrowheads. When you have completed the puzzle, you'll find the first name of a character from TV's *Minder*. Just write the name of the actor who plays that role on the entry coupon on page 53 (where full competition rules also appear). The winner will be the sender of the correct entry opened after the closing date of Monday 2 April 1990.

