



Esh Parish



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Screen Review

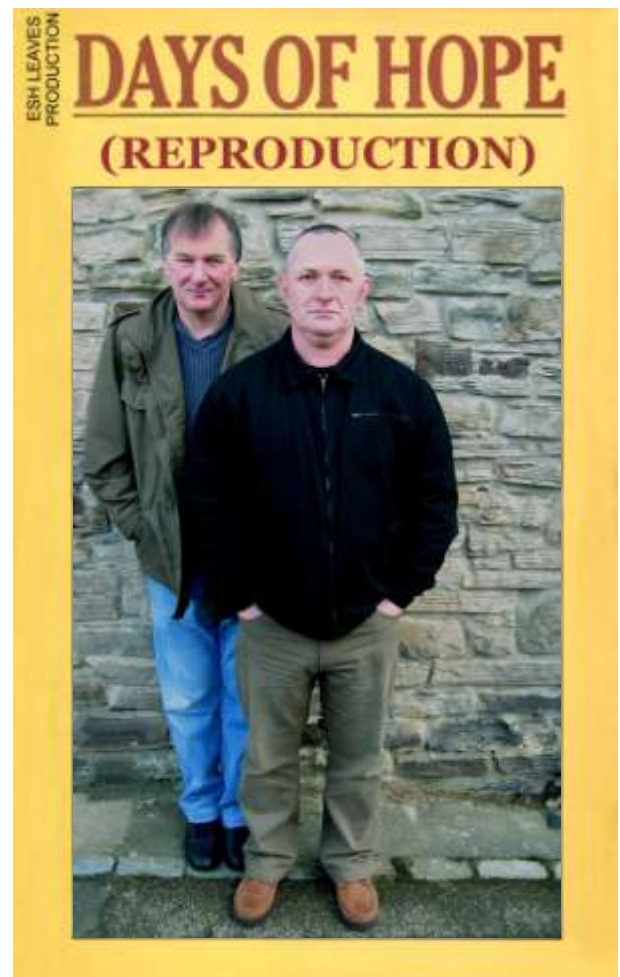
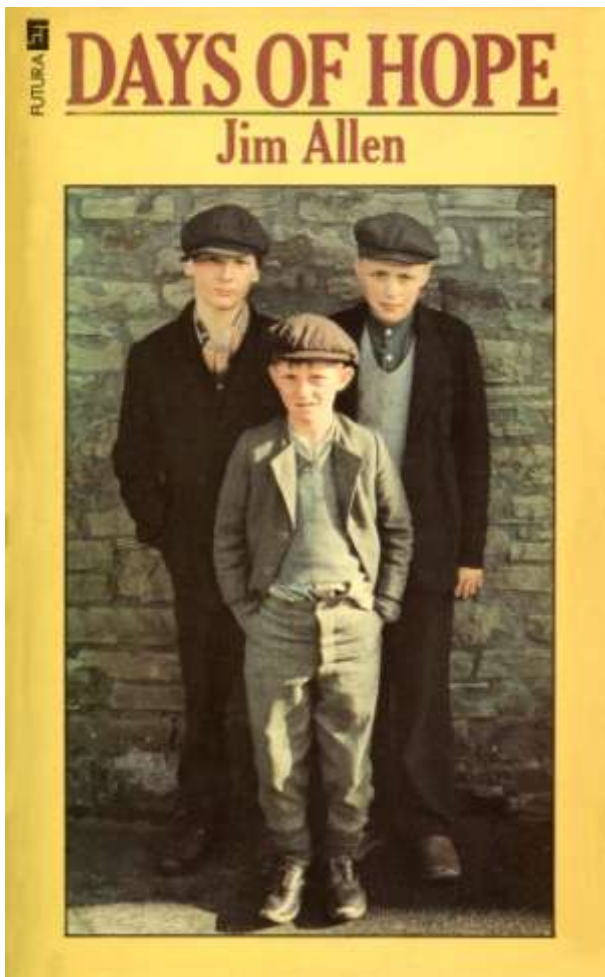
Special 'Days of Hope' Edition

When the Cameras came to Langley Park

The BBC cameras descended onto Langley Park in 1973 to film an episode of the “Days of Hope”. Several local residents took part, as extras, and what follows are some of their treasured memories. The Langley Park episode was transmitted by the BBC two years later on Thursday 18 September 1975. With the kind permission of **Radio Times** we are replicating the above masthead and listing of that day on page three.

A TV tie-in to the “Days of Hope” series was written by Jim Allen and published by Futura Publications Ltd in 1975 (ISBN: 0 8600 7249 5). The front cover featured three of our local lads leaning against a wall in Railway Street (see photo on the left). We have now traced two of these lads (David Thompson - on the left, and Robert Bradley - in the centre) and taken an up to date photograph of them standing in exactly the same location as the original one (see photo on the right).

We now need your help to trace the third lad featured. If you know where he is could you please let us know (0191 373 6687) so we can contact him to arrange another photograph to be taken – this time with all three present!



Days of Hope

The 1970's was a rather worrying time for Langley Park. Rumours were rife that the main breadwinner of the village, the colliery, was about to close down with the inevitable loss of many jobs. Yet, it was during these uncertain times that a little light relief came to the village. Film crews and well known actors' arrived to make films for television, and a number of local people, including children, would now be needed as extras. Langley Park's quaint old colliery streets were obviously ideal for the type of films BBC and ITV wanted to screen. Films such as '**A Captain's Tale**', made by Tyne Tees Television, and '**The Stars Look Down**', made by Granada Television, to be screened in 13 episodes. The BBC also made '**Days of Hope**', to be screened in four episodes, that covered a period from 1916 to the General Strike of 1926. The first episode of '**Days of Hope**' was shown on Thursday, 11 September 1975, and the episode filmed in Langley Park was shown the following week on Thursday 18 September. Strange as it turned out the title of that film reflected the reality of Langley Park in the autumn of that very same year when all the rumours turned out to be true and the colliery did close down after mining coal for a hundred years. At that time the future of Langley Park looked very bleak, and it was predicted the village would fall into gradual decline. These were indeed **days of hope** for the Langley Park miners - **hope** that they would soon be able find a job to support their families. Fortunately, the dismal predictions for the future of the village never happened, and today Langley Park is alive and well.

Nowadays many in the village affectionately remember the happier times of the 1970's, and the acting parts they played when the cameras arrived. One such lady is Jean Spence, who acted in the film '**Days of Hope**', that was produced by Tony Garnett, directed by Ken Loach and written by Jim Allen. Jean told me it was 1973 when she acted the part of May Barnett, one of the main characters in the second episode of the film, and with it being a speaking part it was necessary for her to join the actors' union EQUITY. Set in 1921 the episode shows the hard times suffered by miners' and their families in a fictional County Durham coalmining village during the miners' strike.

The filming mainly took place in Railway Street where Jean's film character, May Barnett, and coal miner husband Joel Barnett lived in a Railway Street house. With no wages coming into the house Jean also acted a scene riddling colliery waste on a bank side at Malton Colliery in a desperate attempt to find coal to keep her family warm. Also in the story was a man called Ben Matthews (acted by Paul Copley) who, being on the run from the army, took refuge in May Barnett's house.

While making the film the BBC took over Langley Park's 'Youth Centre' (formerly the Parochial Hall), where the actors' changed into their costumes, make-up was applied, and wigs fitted to perfection. Jean went on to tell me about her happy memories of taking part in '**Days of Hope**', and what lovely people the film crew and make-up artists' were. Of course, there was quite a bit of



Jean Spence looking at her photograph and caption in the actual Radio Times, published in September 1975, that describes the part she played in the second episode of 'Days of Hope'.

(Many thanks to the BBC for permission to use the Radio Times)

***Below is the Casting List
as it appeared in the
Radio Times on Thursday
18 September 1975***

9.25 Days of Hope

by JIM ALLEN

The second of four films from the Great War to the General Strike 1921: Every pit in Britain is idle. The miners have been locked out because they refuse to accept wage cuts. Lloyd George has sent troops to the coalfields: the revolution in Russia is fresh in people's memory.

Ben Matthews.....PAUL COPLEY
Joel Barnett.....GARY ROBERTS
May Barnett.....JEAN SPENCE
Jenny Barnett.....CHRISTINE ANDERSON
Children..... ROBERT BRADLEY

GILLIAN HALL

Billy Shepherd.....ALUN ARMSTRONG
Tom Crisp.....HUGHIE TURNER
Bassett.....ERNIE MACK
Coal merchant.....TOMMY BULLER
John Pritchard.....EDWARD UNDERDOWN
Mrs Pritchard....MARGARETTA SCOTT
Police Sergeants.....EDWARD SIVELL

MAX STEWART

Pit Manager.....EDWARD BROWN
Army Officer.....BARRY STOKES
Army Sergeant....FREDDIE CLEMSON
Lorry driver.....JOEY KAYE
and JIMMY RUSHTON, ALAN SNELL

Editor ROGER WAUGH
Designer MARTIN JOHNSON
Producer TONY GARNETT
Director KENNETH LOACH

standing around in between film takes she told me, but the film crew were such wonderful personalities that much of the time was spent laughing at their hilarious sense of humour.

Prior to the film appearing on television Jean and her husband Bernard, and a friend who acted as Jean's daughter in the film, were invited to a special preview of their episode in London. 'We had a marvellous time', she said, and after the preview and meeting the actors' they were wined and dined before being taken to their luxury hotel.

Jean obviously impressed the BBC, as she was also invited to take part in another film called 'The Price of Coal', also directed by Ken Loach. This time the filming took place in Yorkshire.

Just recently a Langley Park gentleman called Robert Bradley told me he played the part of Jean's son - called Tommy in the film. He was selected to be an extra at an interview in the local school, after which, this budding young actor was invited to the youth centre where he was shown the clothes he would wear on the film set, including a pair of clogs, and that - never to be forgotten - cloth cap. He was also invited to the County Hotel in Durham City and met a number of experienced actors who were also taking part in the film. Robert then went on to tell me about the fantastic time he had, and his memories of the various scenes, especially the night time scene when he was dressed in a nightdress down to his ankles sitting at the family table being served a bowl of soup from a very large hot pot with a very large ladle. Of course, one happy memory he enthusiastically told me about were those delicious bacon sandwiches and cakes served from the mobile canteen, either on the set or outside the youth centre. Looking back, he told me, it seemed such a long time ago. Yet, there is no doubt he was given a certain amount of fame through his film role. Apart from appearing on television, he was also one of three Langley Park lads whose photograph appeared on the front cover

of the 'Days of Hope' book, also written by Jim Allen, and published in 1975 (see the photograph on page one).

I have been having chat with Phyllis Ritchie and her daughter Angela Shelton who both acted in 'Days of Hope' as extras. Angela was only three years old at the time, and the only thing she can remember is running down a road after a food wagon with her Mam. Phyllis told me the food wagon was travelling down the road from the Post Office to Railway Street where the food was unloaded for the miners' families. Phyllis, who mainly acted in the crowd scenes, explained how realistic the scenes were, 'almost frightening at times', she said, especially



Angela Shelton and her mother Phyllis Ritchie. © Terry T. Chilton.



Mavis Clark.

© Terry T. Chilton



Mavis Clark (left), and her friend in costume near the end of Logan Street, waiting for their next scene in the film 'Days of Hope'. You will notice other extras in the background, and the stone building where miners' wages were paid (later demolished), that stood at the end of Railway Street.

when the acting soldiers arrived in Railway Street, glowering at the crowd with intense expressions. Just after that, the scene developed into a major disturbance when the soldiers tried to confiscate the food delivered for the starving miners' families.

Nearly all the people I talked to had at least one member of their family who had been a miner. Especially Langley Park lady Mavis Clark, whose father and his three brothers' were all miners', as well as her own brother, two brothers-in-law, and her husband and his father. Mavis, who also acted in the film as an extra, told me she enjoyed the experience so much she was there every day the filming took place.

'We had a great time' she said, 'one professional actor made us all laugh so much during a running crowd scene it had to be stopped and the whole scene filmed again'. Obviously, the object was to make the scenes appear as real as possible. However, Mavis remembers being a little too real on one occasion. During a Railway Street scene when police and soldiers barged their way into the Barnetts' house looking for Ben Matthews and viciously slapped May Barnett's daughter Jenny, May was forced out into the street in a very distressed state. This moment was to be Mavis's most dramatic scene. Quickly pushing her way through the crowd, she walked over to May Barnett, and placed a friendly arm on her shoulder while saying, with a great deal of feeling, 'What's the matter Jean?'. The filming immediately stopped, and the whole scene had to be acted all over again. In the excitement of the moment, dear Mavis had used Jean Spence's normal name instead of her character name of May.

In writing this article I have had the privilege of talking to some lovely genuine Langley Park people who acted in 'Days of Hope', and I am in no doubt they all thoroughly enjoyed those exciting days when the film crews came to Langley Park and made a film that left a lasting impression on all those who too part in it.

Terry Chilton.

Your Next Edition of Esh Leaves

We hope to run a similar article in the next edition of Esh Leaves, on "A Captain's Tale", which was also part filmed in Langley Park. It is an amazing true story of a relatively unknown County Durham football team, mostly coal miners, which won the first World Cup.