

Real life

Helen lives high life dating her Sugar Daddies online

Writer Helen Croydon, an old girl of Sandbach High School, has written a book about the rich and powerful men she met through an online dating site. She talked to **Alan Cookman**

HELEN Croydon has not exactly led a sheltered life.

As a journalist, she tends to cut to the chase: "There's nothing wrong with a polite orgy"; "Your hot tub or mine?"; "Naked except for bodypaint."

Articles like these have made the engineer's daughter from South Cheshire a sought after expert on relationships, sex and the sex industry.

But Helen's serious, analytical work has appeared in national broadsheets as well as for magazines like *The Erotic Review*.

Now, the former Sandbach High School girl, pictured, has published her first book - *Sugar Daddy Diaries: When A Fantasy Becomes An Obsession*.

It's an honest account of her online dating experiences in which she asks whether power and wealth can ever be a substitute for love.

From Sandbach, Helen's family moved to Alsager before she went to Sheffield University where she graduated in Japanese.

Although she'd always dreamed of becoming a journalist, her first job was as a tax accountant. "They needed Japanese speakers and the corporate route was a way of using my language skills," she says.

But after two years, she went to college in London to study for a career in broadcasting, although she says one of her regrets is not having studied print journalism, her first love.

"I still don't know why I chose broadcast journalism. My dream had always been to write for newspapers."

But Helen made her mark in TV and radio news, as a reporter, producer and presenter, before becoming a freelance writer.

"When I went freelance to concentrate on print journalism, I felt I needed a niche, and because I'd already started working on the *Sugar Daddy Diaries* it made sense for me to specialise in dating issues."

The book is a record of Helen's adventures on a dating website used

by older men. In the end she dated around 100 men in total over the three year period.

"I've always had a penchant for older guys," says the 33-year-old. "At work, I was meeting naive and needy guys of my own age, so I joined the website and began dating older men, not because I was looking for Mr Right, but because I wanted to meet people I could have an intellectual rapport with."

Helen kept a diary throughout her dating exploits. "I've always kept a diary, written down my thoughts, ever since I was a little girl in Sandbach," she says.

"The idea of a book on dating came later. When I reached the end of the dating phase and began to reflect on my life during that three-year period, a memoir began to seem possible. But I didn't just sit down and write it."

Helen says she learned a huge amount during those three years.

"The experience changed my view of relationships, making me realise that there are other models than the conventional ones."

"People either date for casual sex, or with the intention of forming lasting relationships, marriage, children and so on."

"I didn't want either of these. I was looking for something else."

Through the dating website, Helen met men of different backgrounds and nationalities, sometimes just for dinner and drinks, but sometimes for a longer relationship. "They were mostly really successful men, busy professional men with no time for normal relationships. And some of them were very wealthy high-flyers."

"I was taken shopping in New York and skiing in Colorado, and one sugar daddy took me to his home in Malaysia."

For a while, she became addicted to the jet-set lifestyle, dining in the best restaurants, travelling first class and meeting fascinating, powerful men.

Now, having established her niche,

she plans to continue writing articles on dating and related topics.

"I'm also working on book number two, although at the moment it's just a flurry of ideas that I haven't got round to formulating," adds Helen.

Helen lives in London and says she single and happy to be so.

"While I'm not looking for a conventional long-term relationship with a view to marriage and kids, I do want to find something with more depth and involvement than the types of Sugar Daddy relationships I've had - I'm definitely not on that site any more."

She keeps in touch with relatives in Alsager, and tries to visit her widowed mother in Sandbach regularly.

"Mum is really supportive," she claims. "She knows my journalism is analytical and observational and appears in serious publications like *The Times* and *The Independent*."

"She doesn't worry that I might be immersing myself in a horrible, seedy world of sex."

■ *Sugar Daddy Diaries* is published in paperback by Mainstream priced £7.99 and is available to buy from the publishers online, at Amazon and most major bookshops.



2 minutes with

As one of the area's first lady locksmiths, Sarah Jane Colclough is known to her clients as Lucy Lock-It. She is 36 and lives with her partner and their two children in Ruxley Road, Bucknall.

What did you do before becoming a locksmith?

I'd spent five years at home looking after our two children, but before that I did office work, everything from credit control to order processing.

So why the big career change?

Me and my partner Carlos, who is Portuguese, have two young children, although I also have an older child from a previous relationship. When the little ones came up to school age, I wanted to go back to work, but not on a nine-to-five basis for the sake of the children, so that ruled out going back to office work. I wanted to be able to take them to school and bring them home, and that meant working at home. I don't know why I decided to be a locksmith, but I did think it would be fun to be the first lady in the area doing it.

Did it entail much training?

Not really, I just went on a three-day course in Essex during the summer holidays. It was organised by the UK Locksmiths' Association and I found it really inspiring. I was the only girl out of seven on the course, and I loved it. I didn't find the training difficult and the tutors and the other students were very nice. The hardest thing about it was being so far away from Carlos and the children for three days, although I spoke to them all on the telephone every day.

How soon did you set up in business?

I did the course in July and by the end of August, I was officially self-employed and ready to go it alone as Lucy Lock-It. It was a bit daunting, as you'd expect, starting my own business, but exciting too. It's a great feeling when you get the service up and running.

Are you on 24 hour call?

Yes, but thankfully I don't get many calls in the middle of the night. They are mostly early in the morning or sometime in the evening. Usually I just have to pick the lock and let the customer into the house, although it depends on the type of lock. Cylinder locks are the easiest. It doesn't normally take very long.

Have you any regrets?

None. It was a bit scary at first because becoming self employed opens your eyes to how much competition there is out there and how tough it can be to work for yourself. But I was determined to have a go, and I'm thoroughly enjoying it. With the help of Carlos and other members of the family, I'm able to provide a 24-hour service without neglecting the children.

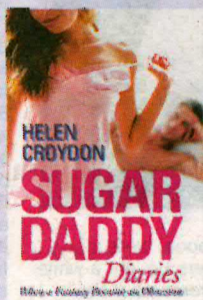
An extract from the *Sugar Daddy Diaries*...

'A young girl is the ultimate trophy for a man,' he continued, reading my expectant face.

'She's a beautiful, pure creature. Plump skin, innocent eyes, firm body.' He looked around the room and his gaze rested on a young strawberry-blond girl in a long backless dress.

'But she isn't a real woman yet. She's just beautiful to look at. As a woman gets

older, she gains wisdom and intuition and a strength of character that men don't develop. It's very powerful. But then she loses her looks. She substitutes one attribute for another. I find a mature woman captivating but in a



very different way from a young, beautiful, innocent girl.'

Those words have always stayed with me. Every time I find myself fearing growing old and wrinkly and untoned and varicose-veined and ridiculous in leather trousers, I think of Date One's consolation. My strength of character, my savoir faire, will replace all that in one fell swoop. It will say, 'Take that, lost youth. I'm much more powerful than you!'

But it also struck me that what Date One was seeking was the fulfilment of a chunk of his sexual and romantic desires. The vacancy for a strong, supportive female role was filled by his wife; it was the young, blue-eyed picture of innocence that he was wanting.



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