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Woman

Bonus mag

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I ditched fizzy drinks... and LOST 14ST
ABSOLUTELY FATIGUOUS TV STAR'S WEIGHT LOSS DIARY

DYING... BUT IT DIDN'T STOP ME BECOMING A MUM

'I QUIT!' BROODY HOLLY SHOCKS PHIL



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'NO MORE DIETS!'

How she WON her body battle
'I said NO to surgery!'

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My Ab Fab lifestyle MADE ME FAT!

Comedian and *Ab Fab* star Helen Lederer shares her searingly honest weight loss diary...

Just like ditzy *Catriona*, the character I play in *Absolutely Fabulous*, I used to love staying out drinking all night and dancing until dawn.

Only, my hedonistic lifestyle took its toll on my waistline. At 5ft 2in, it's easy to tell when I've put on a few pounds. By 2014, at 60 years old, I was going out at least five times a week. I loved sipping on Prosecco or vodka.

And, during the day, when I wasn't working on *Absolutely Fabulous: The Movie*, or appearing on *Loose Women*, I was busy writing my novel, *Losing It*. I only left my desk to eat, and I'd gorge on cheese and bread.

But my *Ab Fab* lifestyle was making me fat and I struggled to squeeze into my size 12 jeans.

Then, earlier this year, a friend told me about Slimmeria - a health retreat designed to help you lose weight fast. She warned

me it was strict, but I signed up. I even had to agree to a week-long detox before the retreat.

By the time I arrived at Slimmeria in East Sussex, in October 2016, I'll admit I was nervous. But at 13st, I had nothing to lose but weight...



With *Ab Fab* co-star Jennifer Saunders

The retreat

DAY 1 WEIGH IN

When I arrive, I meet another slimmer and we share our fears about the naughty snacks – and, of course, glasses of bubbly – we're going to miss. I consider sneaking out to the nearest supermarket to stock pile some crisps for emergencies but I stop myself. I really need to give this a try.

We're all weighed on arrival. They don't tell us the figure, but I know I'm around 13st. I'm a size 16 and I pretend that wearing elasticated skirts are nicer than jeans. Right now, I can barely bend over to zip up my boots. This is going to be tough – I just hope it works.



Exercise classes were a key part of every day

DAY 5 NO CRAVINGS

It's strange, despite only eating 400 calories a day, I don't feel hungry at all – I'm just concentrating on the end goal. I'm not even hankering for my usual vodka tonic. As long as I'm kept away from tall glasses I think I'll be fine!

DAY 6 DANCE CLASS

I try a Zumba class. Despite my dodgy lower back and arthritic big toe, I love every second of it. We're taught how to do the *Saturday Night Fever* dance routine – I'll definitely bring that one out at the next party!



Zen-ed out after a long, hard day...

DAY 3 DAILY ROUTINE

We follow the same routine every day here. We go out for a walk, or do exercise classes – only breaking to eat low-calorie meals such as vegetable broth and quinoa or to drink another juice.

All the food is made by weight loss guru Galia Grainger, the founder of Slimmeria. Cabbage seems to be her favourite ingredient – I've eaten so much of it I'm dreaming of coleslaw at night.



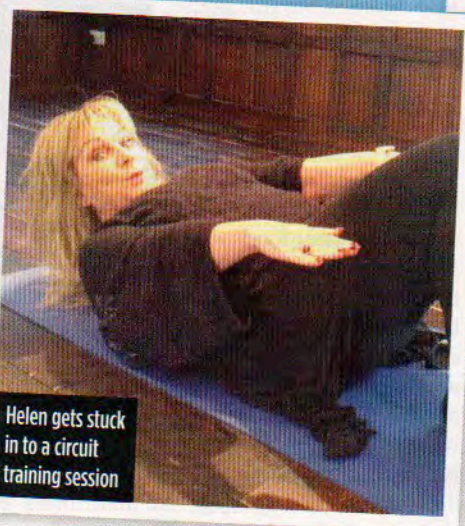
In waterproofs for the first time in her life, Helen sets off on a six-mile hike

DAY 2 MORNING HIKE

A bell rings at 7:15 to wake us up. I wonder if I've accidentally ended up in a strict boarding school rather than a health retreat!

I avoid the mirror as I go down for breakfast. I'm hoping for some toast, so can't fake any enthusiasm when I'm served a hot lemon drink with a miniscule slice of apple.

Then we set off for the first morning walk. For the first time in my life, I slip on a pair of waterproof trousers and an anorak. One hour in and my body is aching. Everyone is so much faster than me. After six miles we finally get back. I'm so hungry, I actually enjoy the glass of vegetable juice.



Helen gets stuck in to a circuit training session

DAY 7 LAST DAY

I can't believe it's my last day here – and I haven't cheated once! We're weighed again and when Galia tells me I've lost 8lb I'm shocked. The others clap when I tell them. I'm a bit nervous about going home though, especially with all the temptations in my fridge. But something tells me I can do this.

TWO MONTHS ON...

I've managed to keep all the weight off. I've stayed in touch with the people I met so if I crave cheese or bubbly they keep me on the right track. I still have a good time when I go out but I limit my alcohol to a couple of vodkas and slimline tonics. Slimmeria was the hardest week of my life but I'm much fitter now and I've never felt better. **10**

* Helen's book *Losing It* (£7.99, Pan Macmillan) is out now.

DAY 4 TURNING POINT

I'm really enjoying today. I have to laugh when I catch my reflection during circuit training – lifting weights makes me feel like a body builder. But I feel so proud. I couldn't have done that a few days ago.