

'I TELL CHILDREN I'VE LEFT MY HAIR ON THE BUS!'

PRESENTER **GAIL PORTER** TELLS OK! ABOUT LIFE WITH ALOPECIA AND BEING A 'COOL MUM' TO HER DAUGHTER HONEY

Since developing alopecia overnight 13 years ago, Gail Porter has always been incredibly candid about her condition. In April, the 45-year-old presenter broke down on *The One Show* and admitted that despite coming to terms with her hair loss she feels 'very ugly'. It was a difficult adjustment for former kids' TV star Gail, who became something of a sex symbol when her naked body was projected onto the Houses Of Parliament in 1999 by *FHM* magazine (right).

Yet Gail recently revealed she felt increasingly self-conscious at the time, thanks to her 28JJ breasts. The presenter, who recently underwent reduction surgery, taking her to a size 28C, said: 'When I was modelling I was very thin, purely because I wanted to make my breasts as small as possible. I resorted to the point of anorexia just to get rid of them, but they wouldn't go.' She added: 'When they were projected onto the Houses Of Parliament, I still had no body confidence.'

In more recent years, Gail's made headlines for her battles with insomnia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, self-harming and bipolar disorder, which saw her sectioned under the Mental Health Act in 2011. The former *Celebrity Big Brother* contestant now lives in London with her daughter Honey, 15, whose dad is Gail's ex-husband, Toploader guitarist Dan Hipgrave. Here, she tells *OK!* why she's now more confident than ever...

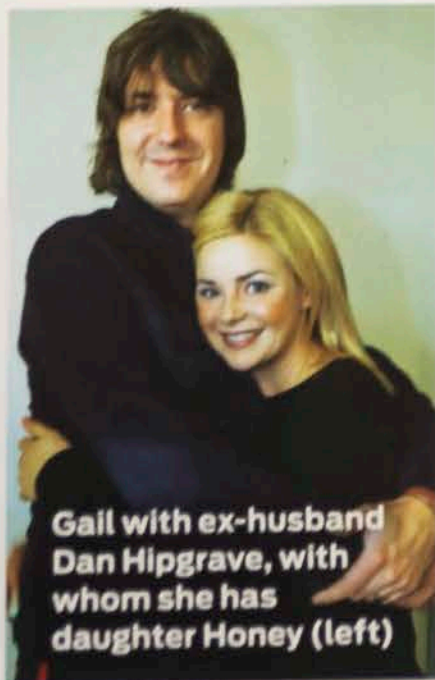
How has alopecia affected your life?

I'm still the same person, I just don't have to go to the hairdresser or buy shampoo!



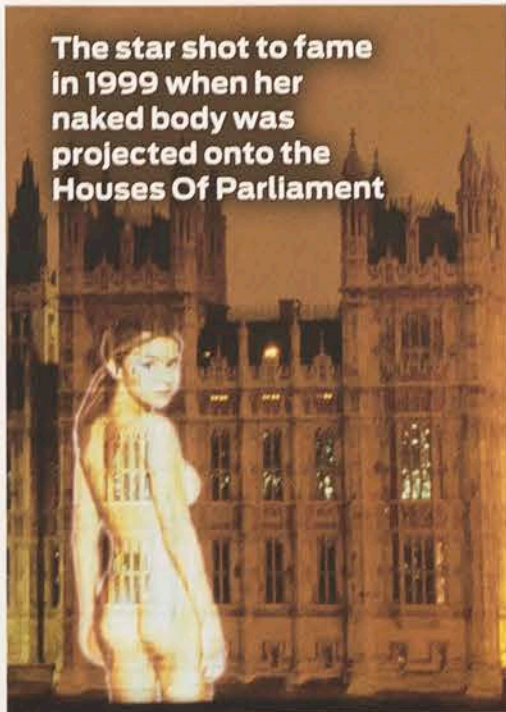
Might your hair grow back?

I've no idea. It grew back once



Gail with ex-husband Dan Hipgrave, with whom she has daughter Honey (left)

The star shot to fame in 1999 when her naked body was projected onto the Houses Of Parliament



before, but fell out again a month later. I don't think to the future.

How has alopecia affected your confidence?

It's made me a more confident person. You have to overcome occasional stares. My favourite is when kids go: 'Where's it all gone?' And I say I've left it on the bus! I don't want to hide away from it.

How much does Honey understand about the condition?

She's only known me as a bald woman, so for her it's just normal.

Is she supportive?

She's very supportive. I'm just her cool mum. She's very proud of me and I'm very proud of her.

Are you still suffering insomnia?

It comes and goes but I'm used to it now and it means I can tweet in the middle of the night!

Since your *FHM* campaign, have you felt the pressure to keep looking that good?

That was in 1999, so I don't really feel that much pressure. I go jogging, I go to hot yoga. I'm really happy. But I don't have hair so I don't think I'll look like that again.

Tell us about promoting Alopecia Awareness Month...



Above: 'I'm still the same person I just don't have to go to the hairdresser or buy shampoo!' says Gail of her alopecia. Below: On *CBB* last year with Sherrie Hewson and Natasha Hamilton



I've had alopecia for 13 years now. I'm quite happy not wearing a wig and I feel like it's my duty as a bald lady to help other bald people. I'm not too embarrassed to talk about it. I have quite a nice-shaped head and I just think alopecia isn't the worst thing in the world.

What made you decide to have your eyebrow microblading done?

My make-up artist Karen contacted me when I lost my brows and eyelashes. But I was nervous about trying anything new because I was still coming to terms with my alopecia. My eyelashes have just come back and I've been trying to draw on eyebrows, but I'm not very good at it so I've been blown away by what Karen's done. It means I don't have to make a mess of my own face! **OK!**

GAIL HAD EYEBROW MICROBLADING DONE BY KAREN BETTS AT KB PRO. VISIT WWW.KARENBETTS.CO.UK.

SEPTEMBER IS ALOPECIA AWARENESS MONTH. SEE WWW.ALOPECIAONLINE.ORG.UK.