

# New faces

# special

Surgery just to look normal

## Look at me now!

### Who's that in the mirror?

By Tom Hoskings, 33, from south London

**I'd just started a new job and was out for a few drinks with my workmates.** We were on our way home and had stopped off at a petrol station shop to get some snacks. I waited outside, decided to make friends with a Bullmastiff tied to a post. 'Hello, you,' I said, bending down to give him a stroke. He seemed to be enjoying the attention. I turned away and felt a huge blow to my face. The dog had head-butted me! I felt something warm and wet on my face. 'I'll call an ambulance!' one of my workmates said, looking at me in horror. **Ambulance! But it was only a nosebleed, wasn't it?** After that, it all happened really fast. The dog's owner came out of the shop and a police car and ambulance rolled up. 'You shouldn't go around petting strange dogs,' one of them said. That wasn't what I really wanted to hear. I was stood there, clutching a clump of tissues to my nose, which was hurting like hell! After what seemed an age, the owner took the dog home and I was taken to hospital. I sat for hours in A&E, holding blood-soaked tissues to my nose. When I was finally

seen, my mate Vince whipped a little bag out of his pocket. **What on earth...?** 'It's the bit of Tom's nose that was bitten off. I've had it in a bag with some frozen peas,' he said. **What!** I thought I was just going to need a few stitches! That mutt had taken part of my nose. 'We'll do our best to sew



Me and my son Hector

it back on,' the surgeon told me. They managed to sew the tip of my nose back on, but a few weeks later it started to turn black! 'I'm sorry, the tip's dying, we're going to have to remove it.' As if that wasn't dreadful enough, there was the stink! It was the smell of rotting flesh. My nose was literally going off! I had to wait another three weeks for the operation. In the meantime, I had to walk around with a piece of white gauze stuck to the end of my nose. I could still breathe and eat properly, but I looked a fright. I saw the looks of horror people gave me when I went outside. I felt like a complete freak. The Royal London Hospital



I don't think the dog liked me!

## She's got Mummy's eyes

### Not the same face

By Sue Morgan-Elphick, 39, from London

**'Anteater! Anteater! the group of boys in the playground would yell at me.** I bit my lip, tried to fight back the tears. If they weren't calling me 'anteater' they were shouting 'Concorde'. I had a very prominent nose and chin. My lower jaw and chin lengthened and curled up until I could 'gum' like Les Dawson with my chin touching my nose, and I couldn't close



Bobbie and her 'bubble'

By Val Cootes, 53, from Manchester

**It's definitely getting bigger,' I said, peering at my granddaughter Bobbie's nose.** My daughter Dawn's baby was five-weeks old, had only come home from hospital a month before. She came home with a scratch on her nose. But instead of going away, it'd got bigger. I took her to the hospital,



Kids used to call me Concorde

my jaws together. When I was 17, I was told I could have an op to change my face. 'It'll be very painful...' the surgeon told me. **Painful. No way - I**

**didn't need any more pain in my life.** So, I decided to get on with things. I qualified as a nurse and, when I was 26, was working at St Bartholomew's Hospital in London, with facial surgeon Iain Hutchison. I watched him cutting and rebuilding other people's faces, and decided I wanted it to be me. The operation sounded horrendous! They were going to peel back my face, and break most of the bones in it so they could reshape them. Six titanium plates and screws would be put in to hold the bones in place. Bone would be taken from my hips to build up my cheekbones. After all that, they'd peel

my face back on again. But before the op, I had to wear train-track braces for 10 months and have some teeth taken out. After I'd had my braces fitted, I went on holiday to The Gambia. We got friendly with some people on holiday, including single dad George and his three girls. He also lived in London

and we met up again when we got home. And then we became an item just before my op! I was in theatre for over eight hours. When I came round, George and his girls, Elizabeth, 9, Jennifer, 7, and Cheryl, 4,



were all sat around my bed. 'You look like a hamster,' said Cheryl. 'No, more like something out of Planet of the Apes,' Elizabeth piped up. As for Jennifer, she ran off to be sick! When I saw myself in the mirror, I didn't blame them. I looked like I'd gone 10 rounds with Mike Tyson! I was allowed home after five days, but it took a year for the swelling to go down. A couple of months after that, me and George got married. We had two more children, Emily, now 8 and Thomas, 7. When Emily saw a picture of me before the surgery, she said, 'That woman has Mummy's eyes.' I love the way I look - I never used to smile, but now I grin from ear to ear!

## Red nose day every day!

### But it just wasn't funny

just to get it checked out. 'Just a birthmark,' they said. But it was getting bigger, started turning into a sort of red 'bubble' on her nose. When Bobbie was two months old, she stuck her finger through her bubble and ended up with blood all over her face. I rushed her to the hospital and by the time I

months, then told us that the red bubble on Bobbie's nose was a cluster of blood vessels that were growing. Something called haemangioma. By then it was so big, it looked just like a comic relief nose! 'We can give her an injection to stop it growing,' the doctor told us. It was really upsetting, to think that Bobbie

would have to live with it. She was the sweetest little girl, didn't seem to notice that her nose wasn't the same as other children's. Then, when Bobbie was nearly 2, I took her to see Father Christmas. 'I'd like a new nose,' she told him. Talk about break my heart... When I found a surgeon at St Bartholomew's Hospital in London who could do something for

Bobbie, I was thrilled. Just before her second birthday, he removed as much of the haemangioma as possible. Bobbie's 6 now, and she'll have to have more operations, but the surgeon has said he'll 'have her perfect before he's finished'.



Bobbie's on the way to having a perfect nose!