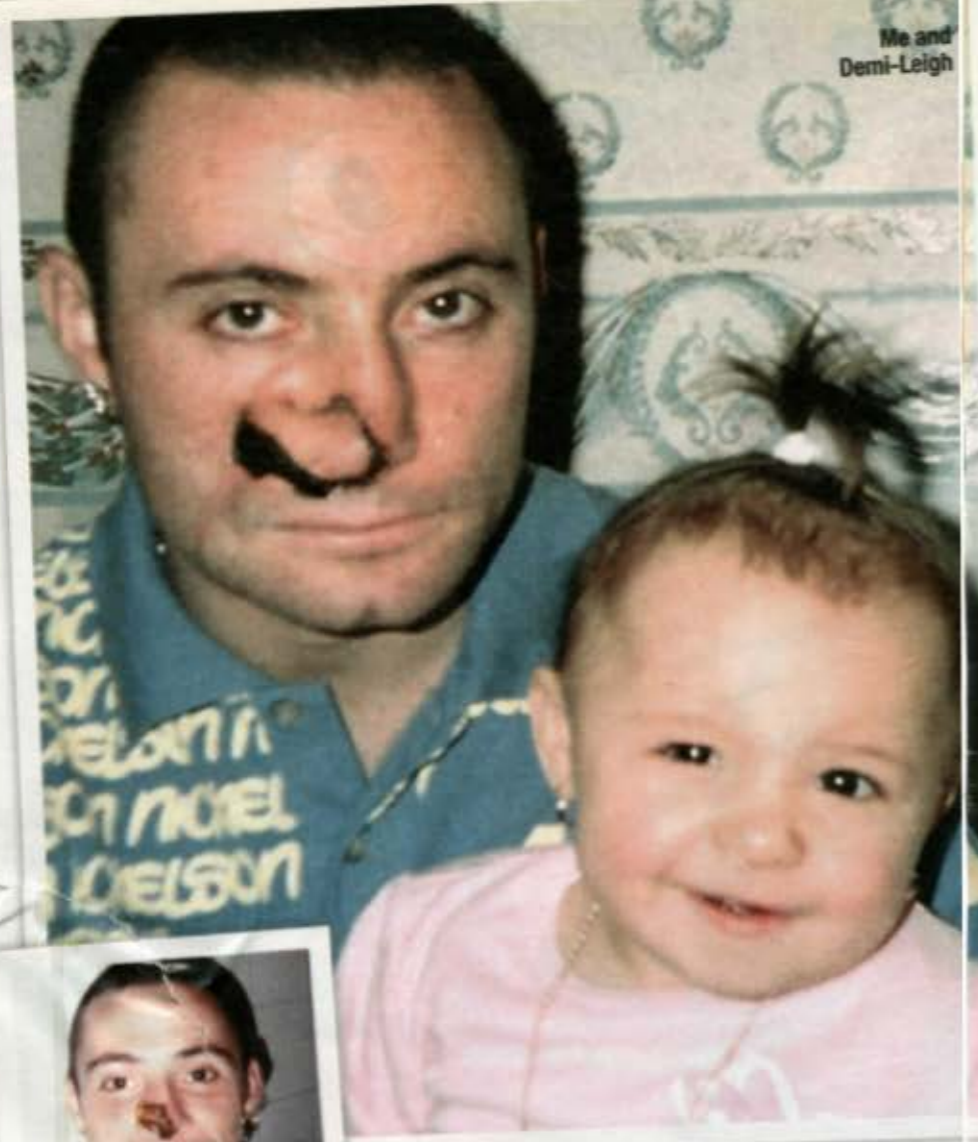


How could anyone LOVE ME?

After losing his nose – and his confidence – Chris Greenhow, 31, thought no one would want him...



Me and Demi-Leigh



Half a nose but happy with Carla

can have to reconstruct your nose,' he told me. 'Skin from your right cheek will be stretched over the missing part of your nose to form a kind of "sausage" of skin.'

I was determined to go through with it. I wanted to look normal again.

Every few days for three months I had to clamp the skin a bit further to make sure I wasn't left with a dead lump on my face. It was painful, but it was to make sure the blood circulated properly.

Three months later, I had another operation to divide the skin. It was amazing. For the first time in nearly seven years I had two nostrils again.

My nose is still bulbous, but the only scarring is a half-moon on my cheek.

It still makes me angry that my attacker was never caught. It would have been nice to see some justice for what I've been through. But everyone is amazed by my new look. At last I don't feel like a freak any more.



I was scarred

Before we knew it, he'd swung his feet up and kicked Rich in the head. The rest of the gang ran back in.

It was just like any other Thursday night. Me and my mates, Des McKenzie and Rich Cunningham, were in a cab office waiting for a taxi home to Hackney, East London. But then a group of cocky lads sauntered in and started giving us lip.

'Look, we don't want any trouble,' I said.

We'd had a really good night at a club in nearby Mile End. The last thing we wanted was a fight.

'Scared?' they taunted.

Just then, a cab arrived. We agreed to let them go first to keep the peace.

The group began to make their way to the cab, leering at us as they went. But one of them lingered, his hands resting on the door frame.

'Here we go,' I thought. I pulled Rich up off the floor, but as I stood up one of them hit me in the face. I tried to regain my balance. Punches flew. Suddenly it was a full-scale brawl.

'Watch out!' shouted Rich.

One of the gang, stocky and with a snarling look on his face, lunged towards me. He opened his mouth wide and a row of jagged

teeth edged towards my face. I couldn't believe what was happening. His teeth clamped together and sank deep into my nose.

I was so stunned I didn't register the pain at first. I just wanted to get him off me. I grabbed him by the throat and tried to throw a punch, but his mouth was locked around my nose.

I had to get this lunatic off me so, in a panic, I pulled myself away from him. Before I knew what had happened, the gang ran off.

I touched my face and felt a warm liquid. My fingers

were covered in blood. It was pouring from my nose. I ran to the toilet to clean up. Seeing my reflection in the mirror, I soon realised what had happened. My nose had been bitten off!

I ran out to try and catch my attacker, but the police were already there. 'It's no good, Chris,' Des said. 'You won't catch them.'

I was so angry. I couldn't let this madman get away. 'Calm down,' one of the policemen warned me. 'Calm down? I only had half a hooter!'

The gang was long gone – and so was my nose. An ambulance crew arrived and searched for it in the cab office. They couldn't find anything – the 'biter' had either swallowed it or spat it out somewhere else.

In the ambulance on the way to nearby St Bartholomew's Hospital, my head throbbed with pain. I kept thinking: 'Oh my God, I've lost my nose.'

I had an operation the following morning. As half my nose had gone, skin from behind my ear was used to form a new tip.

When I woke up, I looked in the mirror. My stomach flipped. I still had a massive hole on the right hand side.

'You can't leave me like this,' I begged the surgeon. 'At the moment, it's the best we can do,' he said.

Mum came to see me. She was livid that my attacker had got away, but she did her best to reassure me. 'It doesn't matter, love. People will get used to it.'

She was right. My friends and family did get

used to it, but strangers looked revolted. I'm a bus driver so I have to face the public every day. I had to get used to the double-takes, sympathetic smiles and staring kids.

'Ugh! Look at his nose,' I heard a lad whisper, as he queued for a ticket.

'Shut up,' his mate urged. 'It's OK, lads. Take a good

year-old daughter, Cindy, found it hard to get used to, though.

'You've got no nose!' she cried the first time I met her.

'It's all right,' Carla whispered, trying to calm her down. 'Chris just has a poorly nose.'

It only took a few jokes for Cindy to realise that I

The gang was gone – and so was my nose

look,' I said, and turned to give them a full view.

Other passengers would ask: 'Wow! How the hell did that happen?' They'd look shocked when I told them, and then I wouldn't hear another peep out of them for the rest of the journey.

But just as I was getting used to the way I looked, an off-hand remark would soon remind me.

'Is that from snorting drugs?' a girl asked me on a lads' holiday.

I've never been vain. I'm not one of those guys who spends hours in front of the mirror. But the way people looked at me was upsetting. I began to feel very self-conscious.

On a night out, two years after the attack, I got talking to Carla. We'd known each other for ages.

'Do you know I've always fancied you?' she confessed. I couldn't believe it. I'd had my eye on her for ages but didn't have the guts to ask her out.

My nose wasn't an issue with her. Carla liked me just as I was. Her nine-

was really a friendly giant. Nine months after we got together, I organised a party. In front of everyone, I took Carla's hand and got down on one knee.

'I love you more than I will ever be able to put into words. Will you marry



Me now
Cindy and Demi-Leigh love the 'new' me

me?' I asked.

'Yes. Of course I will, silly,' she cried.

There was a time when I wondered if anyone would ever fancy me – now here I was with the woman of my dreams.

A year and a half later, as we said our vows at Hackney Town Hall, I turned to Carla and said: 'You look gorgeous.'

'So do you,' she replied.

Our daughter, Demi-Leigh, was born the following year. I didn't want her to be bullied at school because of me, so I went back to St Bart's to see surgeon Dr Ian Hutchison.

'There's an operation you

● Carla, 32, says: 'The first time I met Chris was just after the attack. I was quite shocked by his appearance at the beginning, but I just got used to it.'

'I didn't want Chris to have the operation, but he was worried for the sake of the girls. Demi-Leigh was still too young to be bothered by it, but Cindy used to get really upset by people's reactions to his appearance.'

'In the end, we decided that it would be best for him to go through with it.'

'I fell in love with Chris without a nose – but he'll always be gorgeous to me.'



Me (second from left) and my mates before the attack

As told to Vicky Addinall (vicky.addinall@acp-natmag.co.uk)

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