

Notorious women



Public lives, private faces: Mandy Allwood, above, and Divine Brown, right, as they are today

One minute, **Divine Brown** was just another Hollywood hooker, the next – thanks to Hugh Grant – she was the most famous prostitute in the world. **Mandy Allwood's** desire to have children led to a multiple pregnancy that divided international opinion, attracting both condemnation and support. For holidaymaker **Karyn Smith**, infamy came when she was convicted of drugs smuggling in a highly publicised case that ended in a royal pardon. Here, all three reveal what it's like to have a past that won't go away



Photograph of Divine Brown by Thomas Korns; photograph of Mandy Allwood by Jason Bell

... where are they now?



Mandy Allwood regrets ever involving the press in her life. 'Even the funeral was a media circus,' she says

THE NIGHTMARE MANDY DREADED

8-BABY MUM ARRESTED BY FRAUD COPS
Mandy quizzed

Mandy tells of agony as she loses 8 babies

It could be 25 years, says father of heroin case girl! British girl pleads for her life as drug trial ends

Chilling message awaiting drug girl at the infamous Bangkok Hilton

Mandy Allwood

Mandy Allwood, 33, made headlines in 1996, when she became pregnant with octuplets and, against most medical advice, attempted to see the pregnancy through to full term. She lives with her partner Paul Hudson, 40. The couple have since had two daughters, Color, fifteen months, and Kitari, four months. Mandy also has an eight-year-old son, Charlie, from a previous marriage.

'Just the other day I was in a shop when I noticed two women nudging each other and looking at me. I said, "Yes, I'm Mandy." It's nearly three years since my babies died, but I still get stared at. Sometimes I feel trapped. Even now, Paul and I are pestered constantly by the media. We're hoping to move to America to make a fresh start. 'Looking back, we were both naïve. We'd been together for three years when I decided to have fertility treatment. Since we'd met, my brother had died from a brain tumour, I'd been through a divorce, and I'd had two miscarriages, one of them with twins. All I wanted was another baby; I'd become obsessed, and I felt lonely and insecure. I went for fertility treatment after being diagnosed with polycystic ovarian syndrome. We were advised not to have regular sex while on the drugs and we didn't go against that. As it happened, once was enough. 'At first, the doctor told me I was carrying four babies, a week later it was seven, then eight. It didn't sink in. I was just pleased to be pregnant. Paul worried that my life would be in danger, but he said he'd stand by whatever decision I made. The risks were explained and we were given various options. These included aborting all of the babies, or reducing the number – but even aborting just a few carried the risk of losing them all. I had heard of women successfully giving birth to seven babies and I was healthy, so I thought it was worth the risks. 'The newspapers found out about my multiple pregnancy four months later, when Paul



approached a local TV company with the idea of making a documentary on it. A PR consultant advised us to do a deal with just one paper. I thought that meant one interview. Instead, the *News Of The World* put us in a safe house for three months. The curtains were drawn, and rival reporters paid neighbours for information about us and camped out in front of our house. All I wanted to do was think about the babies. I didn't want the notoriety and was horrified at the stories that appeared. 'Paul was accused of having an affair while I was pregnant. Another newspaper said I only got pregnant to keep him. So-called friends received large sums for their stories. Some relatives were offered money, their comments were twisted and then they were never paid. 'When I lost the babies, over the course of three days in October, it was the worst time of my life. We were devastated. As I left the hospital, a woman shouted to the photographers, "Leave her alone. For God's sake, she's gone through enough." Even the funeral was a media circus. 'The thing that hurt most was the accusation that I'd wanted to keep the babies for the money. There were rumours that we were being paid between £250,000 and £1 million for our story, depending on how many babies survived – that was rubbish. I only wanted enough money to enable us to move to London, so I could get the best medical care in the country. I'd wanted to give the babies every possible chance of survival. All of a sudden I was being castigated as a scheming money-grubber who'd planned it all. How could I have planned it? And it didn't make us

'I'd wanted to give the babies every possible chance of survival. All of a sudden I was being castigated as a scheming money-grubber who'd planned it all'

rich. The money we got would be enough to buy a small house – it's nowhere near the figures mentioned. We've also given some to charities. 'I was worried about how people would react once it was all over, but almost everyone was sympathetic. People would stop me in the street to tell me how sorry they were, and I had condolence letters from around the world. But I also had racist hate mail – because Paul's black. Paul just said, "We've got each other, we can get through this." 'If I hadn't got pregnant again I don't know how I'd have coped. With Color, I was petrified about losing her all through the pregnancy. Everyone wanted to know if I'd had fertility treatment again. I hadn't. 'As a couple, Paul and I are stronger for the experience. We have learnt who our real friends are – those who refused to comment, despite the bribes. I haven't got on with my parents since I've been with Paul, because they don't agree with mixed-race relationships, but I'm touched they were among the few who kept their silence. 'In retrospect, I regret involving the press and perhaps not going into hospital earlier. That might have given the babies more of a chance. Instead, I sat with eight tiny babies, dying one by one on my lap. Talking about it now brings back all the pain. But I've never asked for sympathy. I'll never get over their deaths, but I can live with my conscience.' >

Chris Morris

Karyn Smith

Nine years ago, Karyn Smith, now 28, was convicted of attempting to smuggle heroin, valued at £4 million, through Thai customs. Along with her friend Patricia Cahill, she spent three years in the infamous prison known as the 'Bangkok Hilton', before being pardoned by the King of Thailand and returning to Britain. 'I was the last to know I was being released. I'd heard on the grapevine, but didn't believe it. After three years, the only way I could cope was to resign myself to spending the rest of my life in prison. Towards the end I begged my parents not to come and see me. It was too traumatic. When I was told I was free, I passed out. 'I was frightened of going home. In prison, I had a routine. I worked hard in the kitchen each day to occupy my mind and I learnt to speak Thai. Life there was based on fear and manipulation and I'd grown up quickly. Before Bangkok, I'd been a typical teenager, going to nightclubs and taking nothing

seriously. I didn't know how I was going to adjust when I got home. 'For the first two weeks, I stayed in a holiday cottage in Devon with Mum, Dad, my sister and two brothers. I was too terrified to go home. There were reporters on our front lawn, and cameras set up on the back wall. I felt more trapped than I had in prison. 'For a year, I lived like a recluse. It was six months before I left the house – Mum almost had to drag me out. We went to a shopping centre and I panicked – I was tense and my adrenalin was pumping. I remember two women following me, saying, "Is it her?". 'Often, I'd become suicidal. I kept a knife under my bed, but as I sat there, about to cut my wrists, I'd picture Mum's face and I knew I had to carry on. The turning-point came when I went to stay with a friend's parents in Spain. I was there for three months and nobody was looking at me or following me. It was easier to cope with life after that. 'In the summer of 1994, Mum booked some driving lessons for me. The instructor, Chris,

had no idea who I was and we got on well. I talked about everything but prison. It was so refreshing. 'About two weeks later, he arrived at the house and almost pushed past Mum. "Why didn't you tell me who you are?" he said. "I wouldn't have held it against you." "Because it's none of your business," I said. I don't know how he discovered the truth, but after that, it all came flooding out. I told him things I'd never told anyone and we began to fall in love. 'We got married in August 1995. It was the happiest day of my life. Chris rescued me, and if it wasn't for him, I don't know where I'd be. Our daughter was born in January the following year. She means everything to us. She has given me something else to live for, and now, instead of worrying about myself, I worry for her. I feel protective towards Chris. He gets upset if I talk about my past, so I usually turn to my best friend for that. 'I still get recognised but I don't care so much now. I'm finally beginning to feel comfortable with life again. I still dream about Thailand every other night. I dream



'I still dream about Thailand every other night. I dream that I'm visiting friends who are still in prison there, talking to them through the bars'

that I'm visiting friends who are still in prison there, talking to them through the bars. Sometimes I get flashbacks. If I see Lipton's tea or Coffee-mate in the shops it sends a cold shiver down my spine. It's all we drank in prison. 'I hope one day I'll be able to get a job – but I'm not sure how I'd cope. In prison we were bullied and constantly told that what we did wasn't good enough. I don't know how I'd react to authority. 'I was duped into being a courier. The moment I was arrested I couldn't speak. I didn't know what was going on, and I could only find out when my parents visited me in jail. I feel bitter about what happened – it was a waste of three years of my life. 'I haven't been in contact with Patricia since we returned. We hugged and kissed goodbye at the airport and that was it. We didn't blame each other for what happened. I just think it would bring it all back for both of us if we met now, when we're trying to make new lives for ourselves. 'I've heard a film has been made in America, based on our story. I worry about how we'll be portrayed but we have no control over it. I don't want the past to be dragged up, but there's nothing I can do.' ■

Chris Morris



Karyn Smith had resigned herself to spending her life in jail, above right. 'I begged my parents not to come and see me. It was too traumatic'

Jason Bell/PA News

Jason Bell/Spa Press