

Family Matters

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Alison knows all about Amanda's baby agony

By Bill Gibb

MILLIONS were shocked at the news that *Britain's Got Talent* judge Amanda Holden had lost her baby.

Having suffered a similar loss last year, she kept things secret until she was six months pregnant.

But she and husband Chris Hughes, who have a five-year-old daughter, Lexi, were shattered when at seven months the baby boy stopped moving and was stillborn.

Amanda (39) later thanked people for the thousands of messages of support she'd had during what was "a horrendous time".

Longed for

One person who understood Amanda's agonies more than most was Alison Hall, from Dumfries.

She too lost the baby she so longed for, and now helps run a support group for those who have experienced similar tragedies.

"It was back in 1996 and my husband David and I had two girls already — Sophie and Emily were then six and four," said Alison.

"We decided to have another baby and were thrilled when we learned it was going to be a boy.

"All was going swimmingly and I went into hospital at the end of a routine pregnancy.

"I thought I'd be in labour for a couple of hours and



■ Amanda Holden.

then taking our boy home. But his heart rate started to drop drastically and he was dead when they got him out.

"David's a doctor and I'm a nurse so we have a fair knowledge of medical matters, but this hit us right out of the blue.

"You never expect anything like this to happen, especially when you have two daughters at home waiting for their new brother.

"I was given as much time as I wanted with Ruaridh, as we named him, and spent hours with him. The family saw him and we have pictures that we treasure.



■ Alison lost her baby, Ruaridh.

"That's so important. It used to be that the baby was just taken away and that must have been awful.

"We still don't know what happened, even a post mortem didn't find a cause." Alison says she struggled terribly after the loss of Ruaridh and things were so bad she felt like throwing herself off a bridge.

At her lowest point she heard of Sands, a national stillbirth and neonatal deaths charity, who had a group in Glasgow.

"I was desperate," confides Alison. "That contact saved my life.

"Just to know that there were others that felt the same and being able to talk things through with mums

who had suffered the same thing made all the difference."

Alison is now the chairperson of a Sands support group in Dumfries and Galloway.

All of those involved are mums who have lost babies and they have helped offer support and a befriending service to many grieving parents throughout the region.

Alison went on to have another baby, Finn, who's now 13.

"I couldn't consider not having another baby, it was like my mission," says 47-year-old Alison.

"I wasn't trying to replace the baby I'd lost but it did help. It was a very fraught pregnancy, not enjoyable at all.

"I had a section at 37 weeks and just wanted it to be over. I so wanted a boy and I can't tell you the joy when I heard him cry — with Ruaridh there had just been this dreadful silence."

The news of Amanda's loss a few weeks ago brought the memories flooding back for Alison.

"I still find it very emotional," she adds. "I know how she feels, but to live through it in the public eye must be horrendous.

"Every story is different but heartbreaking. And when we hear the stories from the mums who come to our group it's so difficult not to get upset for them."

■ EACH day in the UK 17 babies die, 10 are stillbirths and seven are neonatal deaths.

Sands was established by bereaved parents in 1978. It aims to support anyone affected by the death of a baby, to work with health professionals to improve care

to bereaved families and to promote research.

There are now eight Sands groups in Scotland and further information can be found at www.uk-sands.org

The Dumfries and Galloway group can be contacted at www.dg-sands.org

Doors fit for a real princess

By Sarah Johnson

A BRITISH company has found one way for Kate Middleton to keep her prince safely indoors ahead of April's nuptials.

Forget commemorative plates and tea towels, one of the UK's leading made-to-measure sliding door retailers, Spaceslide, have designed a Limited Edition Royal Wedding range available from now until the big day.

The doors feature Kate and William's engagement image on glass panels, which come in a range of colours,

including pink and blue with prices from £448.

Jon Gough, managing director of Spaceslide, said, "We experienced Charles and Diana's wedding in the '80s and the memorabilia madness that went with that.

"But times have moved on and consumers will be looking for something different to the usual trinkets.

"We predict they'll embrace opportunities to decorate their homes this time round.

"There are many dedicated Royalists and of course British design is very on-trend at the moment, so we think they'll appeal mostly to those who have a good sense of humour, keen design style and want something a little bit different."

As long, of course, as it doesn't evoke thoughts of that 1990s Gwyneth Paltrow film, *Sliding Doors* — all about how one young woman's life would be different if she didn't make one particular decision . . .



■ The glass doors in pink.

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