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POSING IN JAMAICA WITH HER NEW MODEL MAN

ABBEY CLANCY

TELLS WHY IT'S SHAPING UP TO BE A TOP YEAR

Getting to spend a week in Jamaica sounds like a dream assignment, but *Britain's Next Top Model* new head judge Abbey Clancy was reluctant to go.

"I cried for ten hours on the plane," Abbey tells **HELLO!** about leaving six-month-old daughter Liberty at home. "I left her with my husband and my mum. My mum's amazing – she's better than me at it – and I'm lucky to have that support.

"But I didn't want to come home at the end of it," she laughs. "Because I knew it meant going home to night feeds and no sleep. No, I'm joking. It was tough though."

The 30-year-old model and presenter lives in London and Liverpool with her footballer husband Peter Crouch as well as Liberty and their eldest daughter Sophia, four. Abbey says it was a wrench being away from the family. "When I got to Jamaica I smashed my phone, so I was using everyone else's, racking up massive phone bills," she says.

It's a sweet return to *Britain's Next Top Model* for Abbey, who got her big break on the show a decade ago when she was runner-up. Now she is back joining co-head judge, model Paul Sculfor, with whom she poses in these exclusive photos, shot on location in the Caribbean. Completing the panel are top photographer Nicky Johnston and fashion journalist Hilary Alexander.

Abbey says the new series reflects how the industry has changed since she started out. "The contestants are different sizes, shapes and backgrounds. It's more inclusive and I like that. Modelling is so diverse and there's a place for everyone."

Paul, who rose to fame in the 1990s, agrees. "There's a great collection of different girls from different places, ages, ▶ everything," says the 44-year-old East Londoner. "And there are some seriously strong personalities as well. Drama is guaranteed."

Abbey adds: "You don't want someone who's like a mouse and doesn't come alive. It's such a big brand that we need someone who can stand proud and be a great ambassador for us, not Miss Watching Paint Dry."

Abbey has her family to thank for keeping her grounded. "I think it's being Northern and Scouse," she says. "My mum would batter me if I started carrying on." Paul smiles and says: "Same here. I've got a good family background."

As she returns to the show that made her name, Abbey reflects on how far she has come and the lessons she has learned along the way.

Is it good to be back on *Britain's Next Top Model?*
"It's amazing. I don't know where the last ten years have gone. I can't believe I was one of these girls once, and now I'm a mum of two, and a head judge on the show, alongside Paul. But I do know how the girls are feeling. I've been there, I've been in their shoes."

What sort of judge are you?
"I've been a lot tougher than I thought I would be, because they need to realise this is a massive platform for them."

How do you get on with the rest of the panel?
"They're brilliant, we've had such a laugh. I remember Hilary from my time on the show and she is the absolute expert. Paul tells terrible jokes – the sort of jokes your granddad would make. And Nicky is just absolutely hilarious. You'll always find us giggling in a corner somewhere."

What do you think when you see old footage of yourself on the show ten years ago?
"I looked completely different then. I had bigger boobs, for a start. I put on a stone when I was living in that house because I was eating rubbish and not exercising."

You look incredible now. How do you keep so trim?
"I don't diet or go to the gym, but I do run around after the children all day. I've got 4st of child on one arm and a baby in the other arm, so that's enough exercise for me. I've got narrow shoulders and narrow hips, which makes me look really slim, but I do have good meat on my bones. I'm not skinny, I'm just narrow! Plus, we eat so

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healthily. Because I'm married to an athlete, we just don't have any rubbish food in our house."

Your kids seem to have inherited your looks…

"Ah, thank you. They are absolutely gorgeous. Sophia is really tall already compared to her little friends, her legs are up to her armpits. And Liberty has really long limbs. It was inevitable, really. When you're got a dad who is 6ft 8in and a mum who is 5ft 9in, you're not going to be short."

How would you feel if your girls wanted to follow you into the modelling business?

"I've had a fantastic career and I've loved it. I'll support them in whatever they want to do as long as it makes them happy."

What do you love about your job?

"Everything. I love meeting new people and having a laugh. And I love getting dressed up, because I don't wear all this make-up and have my hair done every day. I'm quite low maintenance in real life so I like coming to work and being made into different things, then go back home and do my mum stuff again."

Do you hate being labelled a Wag?

"No, I don't really care, to be honest. There are more important things in life. Having kids makes you grow up and it makes you realise that nothing else is important. You definitely worry more about them, but you worry less about everything else."

What advice would you give to your teenage self if you could go back in time?

"I would say to enjoy yourself more and have more confidence. I recently lost a friend at 42 of a heart attack and I can't get over it. It just makes you realise that you should be grateful for the people around you more than anything."

But it's hard to take advice when you're young…

"I say to my little sister, who's 16, 'Don't dye your hair too much or it'll fall out,' or, 'Don't put extensions in or you'll go bald, like I did,' but she doesn't listen. You have to find your own path sometimes and make your own mistakes."

What's the best advice you've given to the girls on *Britain's Next Top Model*?

"Be yourself. Don't compare yourself to other people. You're never going to be everyone's cup of tea. I've been called horrendous things at castings so you have to have a thick skin."

How do you feel about getting older?

"Men age much better than women, I think. My husband is looking so nice. I love it when men have a few little wrinkles and nice bits of grey in their hair. I look older than my mother already, she's got amazing genes. But I'm still working."

What are you most proud of?

"That's easy. I'm most proud of having my two gorgeous babies." H

INTERVIEW: EMMA COX. SIMON BUTTON
PHOTOS: NICKY JOHNSTON

HAIR: MATTHEW CURTIS
MAKE-UP: LEE PYCROFT
STYLING: HILARY ALEXANDER

Britain's Next Top Model *starts on Lifetime on Thursday 14 January at 9pm.*

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Abbey and fellow *Britain's Next Top Model* co-head judge Paul Sculfor strike a pose in this exclusive photo taken on location in Jamaica, where they have been filming the new series. "We've had such a laugh," giggles Abbey. "Paul tells terrible jokes – the sort your granddad would make"

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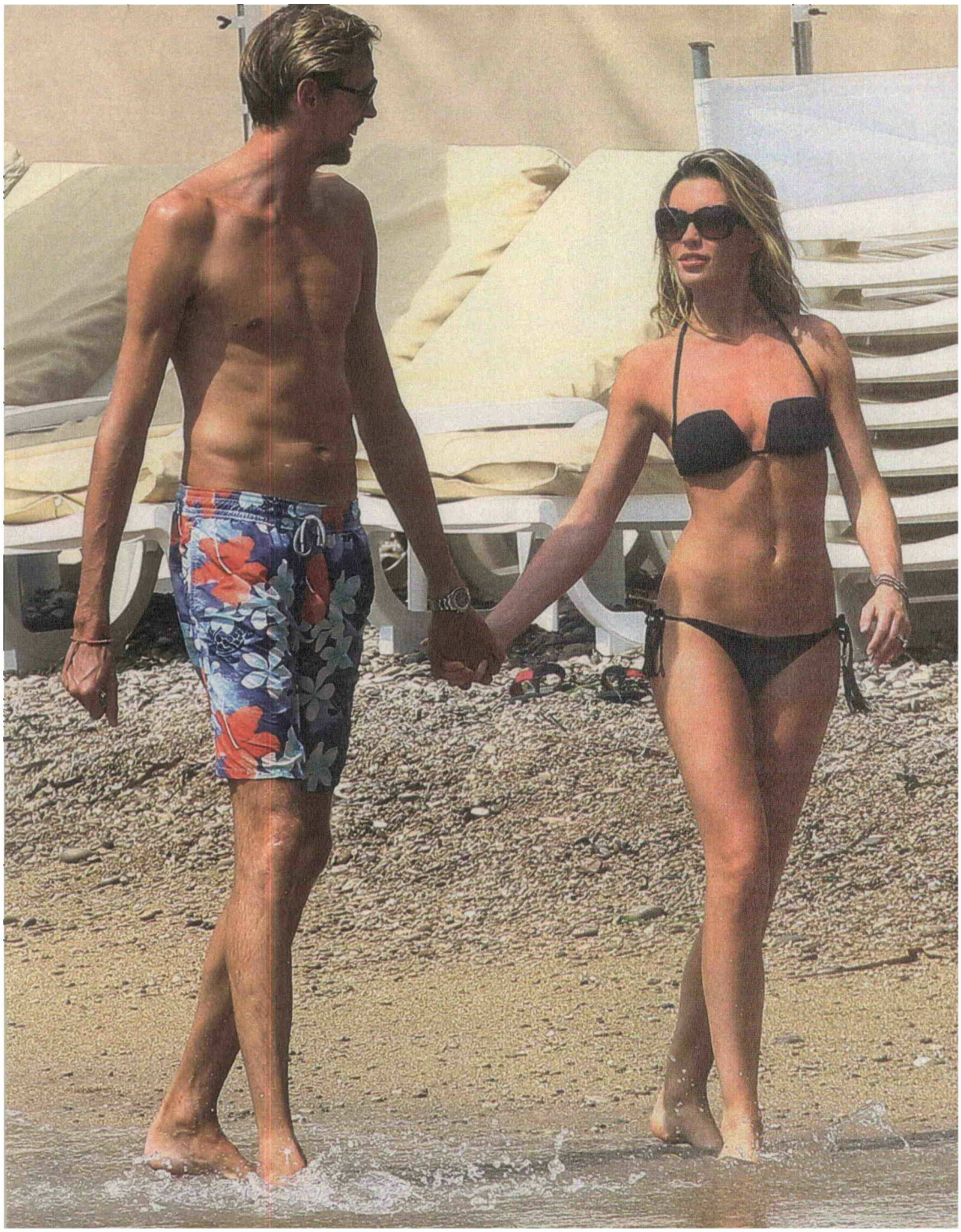

Abbey makes a splash with husband Peter Crouch on a recent beach holiday (above). She tells us she stays in shape thanks to a combination of healthy eating and running around after their two girls. The catwalk star is returning to *Britain's Next Top Model* as a judge ten years after she got her big break as a contestant on the show (below, fourth from left), where she finished second

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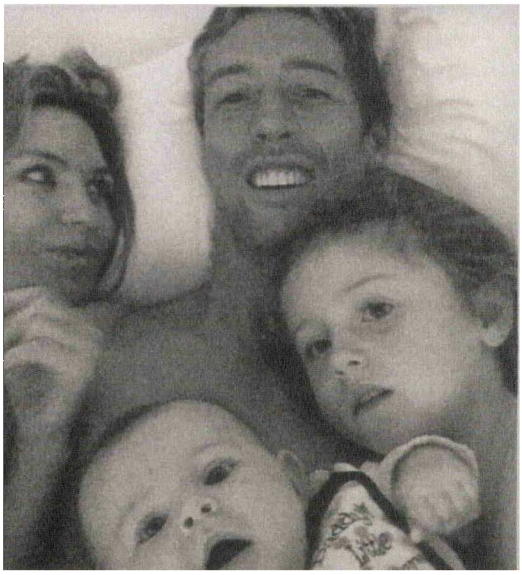
ADDITIONAL PHOTOS: ABBEY CLANCY, ALPHA, FAME FLYNET, REX FEATURES



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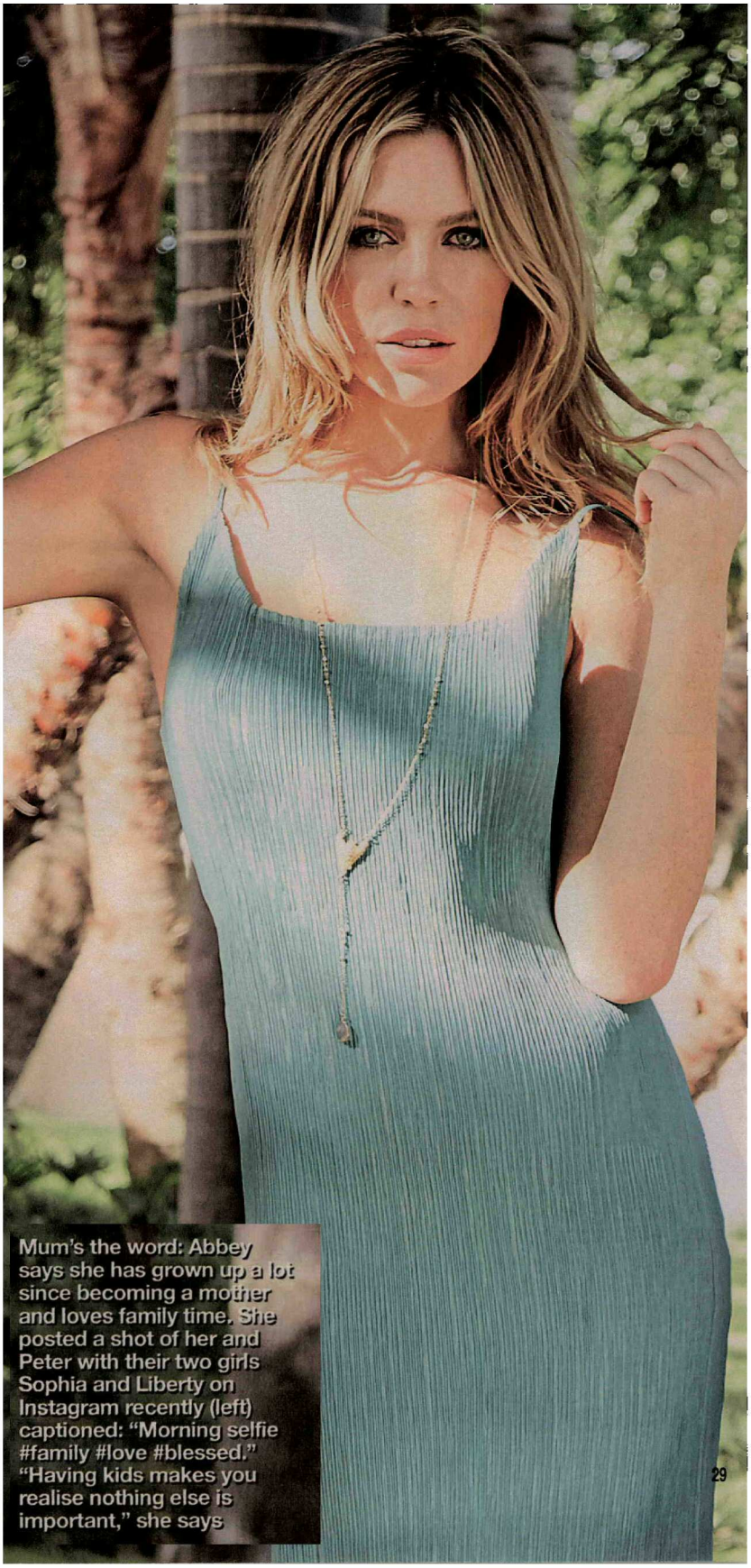

Mum's the word: Abbey says she has grown up a lot since becoming a mother and loves family time. She posted a shot of her and Peter with their two girls Sophia and Liberty on Instagram recently (left) captioned: "Morning selfie #family #love #blessed." "Having kids makes you realise nothing else is important," she says

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