

The real truth about Pregnancy and Birth.

My own personal account.

by

Amanda Caroline Oxlade-Gotobed.

PRELUDE

I had always known that someday I wanted a child of our own but best plans laid aside it doesn't always work out the way you want. The story behind how my husband and I got together is another chapter in itself but when we did get married he already had a 3 year old son by a previous marriage and talk of children was put on the back burner.



As the years went on and the fact that I was now past 30 I set myself an age limit of 35 where we would need to make a decision as to whether or not we would have a child of our own. If you love someone enough then you are willing to sacrifice certain things – one being children. I would not have wanted to get pregnant on purpose behind his back as this could have meant I would have lost him and been a single mum (not that there's anything wrong with that but you 'definitely' know when the man your with is 'the one!').

I wanted our pregnancy to be one born out of pure commitment and love and wanted on both sides.

After spending most of the early part of 2005 talking about it, I gave up smoking on October 2nd (the day after playing Maid of honour to my best friend) and ditched my pills both of which I had been taking/ doing for 17 years thus preparing my body for trying to get pregnant. We knew that it could take up to a year because of the length of time being on the pill and along with my 'excess' weight.

I know it sounds ludicrous but the 'first' time of trying on October 24th/25th I did a test 2 weeks later and was more than astonished that I had got pregnant first time... It was a bit funny actually because I did the test at home then rung my best friend to see if I could go round. On the way I nipped into Asda's where I had bought the test earlier to get a card for Dave (Hubby) and as I walked out the alarm went off.

I showed the purchase of the card and receipt to the Guard and tried again but the alarm went off again. I told the lady that I did have something in my bag I had bought earlier and explained what it was and although the alarm had not picked it up when I had bought it earlier we discovered that this time that was what was setting it off – how embarrassing...

ANTE-NATAL

The first 3 months of the pregnancy were awful!!!!!!!!!!!!!!.

Not only in the fact that we wanted to keep it a secret until I was 12 weeks (just in case) but that so called 'Morning sickness' I discovered to my cost is not necessarily restricted to the morning.... Along with the tiredness I could have slept 23 out of 24 hours a day but couldn't as I was working full-time in a Company I had been in 12 years.

I tried Gaviscon but after the first mouthful gave that up as bad joke as it made me want to be sick more than feeling sick. The Ginger nut biscuits didn't really go down very well either and after trial and error stuck to Rich Tea first thing to take the edge off.

I would finish work at 5pm and after a quick hello to Hubby would crash on the bed for 1-2 hours whilst he cooked Tea – another hurdle. Because I felt sick all day my appetite went downhill as well and I basically had to be force-fed (in a manner) as I had the little one to think of. Apposed to gaining weight in the first 3 months I actually lost 9 pounds...



Due to my age, Dave and I agreed that we would pay for a Scan at 12 weeks (National Health Service only gives one scan at 20 weeks in Basingstoke!) which checks the Nucal fold (part of the neck), this is measured and gives approximate possibility of conditions like Down's syndrome versus normal. I think I was still very much in denial that I really was pregnant at this stage – Dave's mum was invited to come with us and just prior to Christmas we made our way to Frimley in the snow for the scan. After several cups of Water later and the immense need to go to the toilet NOW the Sonographer scanned my tummy and after initially turning my head away and not looking because I was scared there was nothing there, turned to look at the screen and in the murky dark could just make out our Baby.

Dave and I decided to tell the family on a momentous day that had already been earmarked by my parents who were to celebrate their 40th Wedding Anniversary at a local Restaurant. (I just hoped they didn't think I was trying to steal the lime-light). I just thought that this would be the best present Dave and I could give them as I secretly knew they would be over the moon. Dave's mum had already been told on Christmas Day and to say she was very happy would be an understatement!.

We had a cake made which we dropped off at the Restaurant earlier and waited for everyone to arrive. We used one of the scan pictures as an anniversary card and gave to it my parents when they arrived whilst they were getting their drinks at the bar.

I had pulled them to one side so that I could give them the card in private and of course they started thinking we had done something silly but after reading the card twice and the penny dropping to say they were pleased was probably an understatement – the cake didn't go down too badly either (but that's another story...).

Anyway, the next 6 months went off pretty much text-book really, had a craving for Pickled onion Space Raiders (crisps) & pickled onions in the first 3 months, followed by Jam Roly Poly & Custard (basically any pudding's!), mashed potato & lemon squash (not all at once I hasten to add.) I didn't have very much go wrong with the pregnancy except for back-ache and swollen feet towards the end and my belly-button became an "outy" instead of an "inny".

The only other bad thing I can remember is how much pain my breasts got when they got cold – it was like someone having hold of your nipples and squeezing them really hard – not nice...

Oh and I went off tea, chocolate (of all things!) & pizzas – even if someone said the word 'pizza' it would make me retch and gag – I have tried to eat one since giving birth and I still can't stomach them!.

40 weeks came and went by which time I was getting somewhat fed up – we had just had the hottest June on record (+30 degrees) and being full term in that heat is no picnic for anyone.

The Doctors attempted a "stretch and sweep" but my cervix was not going to play ball and it had no affect so I was booked it for an Induction on Monday 31st July. I counted down the days in hope that Baby would come of its own accord before-hand but 'it' didn't.

The Birth!

Monday 31st July, 2006

Dave went to work as normal in the morning and I made sure the house was as tidy and as ship-shape as possible. He took a half-day holiday and came home about 12.30pm.

We ran a couple of errands and then had a MacDonald's as my 'last meal for the condemned woman' before booking in at the North Hants Hospital (Sherborne Building) at 3.15pm.

We were led onto a ward where there was one other young lady and her partner whom I later found out was Clare from Newbury. She was 21 years old and was the same amount of days overdue as I was.

Dave's mum (Pauline) arrived shortly afterwards and after the initial tests (blood pressure, temperature etc) my cervix was examined and a shot of Prostaglandin gel was inserted (an artificial 'sperm' gel) which was supposed to soften everything and get labour started.

We all sat there, chatting amongst ourselves, Dave went and got some snacks and a pre-payment card for the television for me to watch it later on then he left about 7pm

with instructions to return the next morning by 7am with a “sausage baguette for me and Clare” for our breakfast.

Clare and I chatted on and off and my contractions continued at more or less the same strength for a while – it was about 11pm when I realised that actually the tummy ache I had been experiencing all week-end had been contractions and not Bracks & Hicks.

Tuesday 1st August, 2006

Clare was having trouble coping and it appeared that her contractions were coming a lot more often than mine – at 1.50am we both decided we had had enough, we called the midwife and she examined both of us and announced we were only 2cm’s dilated but we could either have some Co-Dydramol or a Pethadine Injection. I knew that the needle for the Pethadine was quite large but felt that I needed to be brave for Clare and to encourage her to have one so we said we would both have one.

Clare had hers in the top of her leg, which looked very painful – I held her hand to calm her down then had to psyche myself up to have mine. After much deliberation I opted to have it in the top of my bottom which appears to have been the better option and didn’t hurt as much.

We settled back down on the beds chatting and for the next 20 minutes the drugs seemed to have a calming effect but then normality (and the contractions) returned with a vengeance. We tried walking about and at one point were standing outside the front of Maternity at 4am just to get some fresh air. We tried to snooze when we could, Clare went for a bath to see if that would help but at 5.35am after I had just come back from my umpteenth trip to the toilet I had to get her the mid-wife as her waters had broken. She was then carted off to a delivery room.

Dave arrived with the food order and I did try and eat my baguette but only managed half. I was then moved down to the delivery room at 8am. Dave went off to see if he could find Clare to give her her baguette and one of the Secretaries came down from the Day Assessment Unit to say my Mother in Law was here but had been put in the Waiting room as you weren’t allowed anyone except your partner in the room. Thankfully when Dave came back he had found Pauline on his travels and brought her back with him.

First things first – The lady looking after me came in and introduced herself, it was her first day back in Basingstoke as she had been living in Sweden with her boyfriend for a while.!!

I had some gas & air (after she learnt how to turn on the bottle!!!) and my waters were broken – very uncomfortable. Then the bit I was dreading as I have had so many bad experiences before, due to very difficult to find veins – they needed to put a cannular in my hand to put in a saline drip so that I didn’t become dehydrated whilst in labour – I tried to be brave and took some more gas & air but after letting her have 2 attempts in the back of my right hand decided no more. She called for an SHO (Senior House Officer) to come but after one attempt from him decided that because my veins were so small an anaesthetist should do it – problem was no one was available as they were all in theatre. I wasn’t until 11am that eventually another lady appeared who was an anaesthetist and she got it in first go.... (no comment!).

The Syntocinon (to bring on the contractions faster) was then put up via a pump so it could be controlled and I sat back and waited. The gas & air on hand for each increasing contraction...

To be honest I don't really remember that much from then on in, the contractions got much worse and I felt like I was permanently on the gas & air. Dave was helping me to the toilet when I needed to, which was no mean feat – We would get half way there, my arms around his neck, off my face, drip in one hand but no room to get all that, me, and the gas bottle into the toilet in one go – we would get half way there and another contraction would rip through me –I'd shut my eyes but my hand would be waving around in front of me searching for the mouth piece to the gas. I would then sit on the toilet waiting for the contraction to finish before I could wee, then the same palaver to get me back to the bed.

At about 3.15pm (24 hours on from initial induction) I went into stage 2 labour (so I was told) and around 4pm I was demanding fish & chips. By this time I was 4 cm's dilated and remember asking Dave to call my mum & dad and tell them I thought it was time they came. They arrived (I don't know what time) but I do remember mum coming in the room to join us and giving me a kiss and cuddle.

Contractions then worsened and I do remember being told I was 8 cm's but NOT to push when I had a contraction. I would try and breathe through on the gas & air but on about the 3rd breath was shouting 'I need to puuuuusssshhhhhhh' as the pressure was enormous. Mum shouting at me – "just breath through it" – easier said than done!.

It must have been around 6pm (don't quote me on it) that I believe I was fully dilated and informed I could push. I remember them saying that I needed four good pushes with each contraction and at this point they took away my life-line (my gas & air)!

I know I was knackered at this point, the midwife watching the machine for my contractions, then asking me if I had a contraction now so that I could push, knowing full well one was on the way, as they could see it on the chart. They put my legs up in stirrups to help open up my pelvis but that in itself was bloomin uncomfortable due to my dodgy hip.

Birth! – Nothing like they make out on the 'Discovery Channel' – when they say 'push through the sting' what they mean to say is it feels like you are passing a huge scratchy coconut!!! – I remember pushing and it feeling like it was coming out of my bottom....

When the baby starting finally coming out, I remember hearing the heart monitor beeping frantically and them saying I had to get angry and get baby out as it was getting tired – my response – 'the baby's getting tired!!!!!!!!!!!!!!'. At one stage they were talking about putting the Suction cup on Baby's head to pull it out –I think that was the incentive I needed to finish the job...

I remember feeling Baby getting stuck somewhere around its nose – I didn't see but I felt every contour of its face.

When they said to open my eyes and look as it was out, I didn't believe them, when I did finally look down, baby was on my tummy looking at me, to which my reaction was "oh my god what do I do with it now??..." I did notice though, that baby was covered from the waist down in meconium (first bowel movement, now all over me!) so I was a little worried that it may have swallowed some.

The fact that Dave and I had just spent the last 42 weeks not knowing the sex had been completely forgotten and when I remembered to ask what sex it was they said for me to see for myself but I could only see the cord and my eye-sight was a little blurred due to the gas & air – I do remember Mum shouting out when they said it was a girl – 'it's a Verity – yesssssss!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

It then struck me that the contractions had just stopped and there was no more pain – I did vaguely feel the needle in my leg to help deliver the placenta after the baby was born That in itself was a weird feeling; it was like they were pulling a warm squishy towel out of my tummy...

Dave was like 'right! – back in a minute' before the nurse had time to ask him to cut the cord so I said my Mum could do it.

Dave returned with my dad in tow and had made the phone call to my best friend Nikk, to say baby was born, and on her way up here could she get me fish & chips!!

With Dave back in the room we introduced baby to everyone present with her full name and mum was over-joyed.

After a few checks and lots of pictures taken by the family Verity was weighed and came in at 8lb 15.6 oz (9lbs more or less). The midwife said that I needed some stitches but they would get someone to take a proper look and sort me out after shift-change – this meant that I still couldn't have anything to eat.

Nikki came up to the hospital with Dave & my dinner and we made her cry (again) when she was told baby's name too.

Everyone then departed as it was getting late, and there wasn't much point in hanging around any longer as all I was waiting for was my stitches and to go to the ward. Finally at 10.30pm another senior midwife came in, examined me and announced I had a second-degree tear. More gas & air while she injected local anaesthetic inside and then 'lots' of stitches, by this time my dignity was gone and I was completely at ease chatting away to her although I felt like a trussed up pig while she stitched me up. The feeling was like pulling baling twine through a card-board box. I felt every stitch but it didn't hurt, the ones through the skin were a different matter, even the needle for the anaesthetic hurt, she said this was because the other was through muscle and 'skin' stitching always hurt more.

Every now and then there would be a squelching sound and when I asked, was informed that yes, it was blood – Dave told me not to look on the floor as apparently

I'd lost about 900ml of blood... After checking me over they decided that my uterus was not contracting, so I had a oxytocin drip put up.

Stitching over, Dave nipped to the rest room to re-heat my dinner in the micro-wave while I managed gingerly to get into a chair to be a little more comfortable. Baby on one side of the room in the cot, then bed then me... Dave went home and I attempted to eat some dinner but fell asleep briefly as I was completely knackered. By this point I had been up 32 hours and basically run a marathon!.

Baby started crying and I had to press the buzzer to get help as I found I couldn't get out of the chair. I was finally moved to a ward about 11.30pm (had to go down pushing my drip – barely able to walk let alone do anything else!).

Must have dozed off briefly about mid-night but woke up covered in sweat and with the shivers. A midwife came to check on me but my temperature was only up slightly. The drip was finished so they took down the bag & pump but wouldn't take out the cannular until I had been for my first wee!.

I spent a long time trying to breast-feed – baby didn't seem very impressed and it hurt!. Felt a complete failure – one of the midwives came to try and help me but 'We' didn't seem to get the hang of it. Persevered all night and felt like I had breast-fed all night as well.