

Harlow Zen Wards Birth Story

Harlow is my third baby having had Rohan 9 years previously and Nayt almost 8 years ago. With Rohan I was induced at 10 days late, in hospital, with an epidural given as I was told he was back to back and it would be too painful, I ended up after 17 hours flat on my back, with a nasty tear and a pretty miserable painful experience to tell but a beautiful baby nonetheless. I had Nayt 16 months later and keen to never set foot in a hospital again, we used 2 Independent Midwives and had an amazing natural home water birth, in less than 4 hours with no pain relief, no stitches and 23 days late! I was out and about within days, a completely different experience to my first. Both babies were reasonable sizes at 8lb 13oz and 9lb 2oz respectively.

With Harlow, because he was my husbands first and I was a bit rusty having had a good few years off baby making, we decided to use another Independent Midwife as the 1-2-1 care is like nothing else, and gives you the confidence that you will get the best birth outcome and overall experience possible, as they really get to know and understand you. As my pregnancy progressed it was clear this baby was going to be on the large size, which I had kind of expected. I was advised to cut down on sugar but with a massive cake craving, this didn't really happen, so I tried damage limitation by continuing to ride as long as I could and towards the end to swim daily and keep up with walking the dog.

I think my confidence in giving birth was knocked a bit towards the end because I had to have a series of late scans to check the placental position, as was slightly lying low at the 20 week scan. This showed up that at 34 weeks the baby was the size of a full term baby. I am reasonable at simple maths, and that added up to one BIG bubba!!

Because of this, I was told to expect an early baby. Unlike my other two pregnancies where I had no pre-labour signs whatsoever, I was starting to get runs of proper contractions about 3 weeks prior to my due date. I had so many signs in fact that I have decided there are no signs until the baby is literally crowning!! Along with contractions, I was nesting, had a show, had a permanently bad tummy, babies head engaged....never happened to me before labour with the other two, bump shifted down....and then my due date came and went...and my bump un-engaged and shifted up!!!

On Tuesday 18th May after my husband Adam had taken the kids to school I started to get decent contractions. I really felt like today was the day. By midday they had gone, and annoyed I took my dog on a hill walk hoping to jolt the baby out with some gravity! Nothing! I was really sure that was it too, as my dog Phoebe had been all over protective, following me around and sleeping beside me wherever I went.

They started again around 11pm, but having sent our midwife numerous 'I think its started' texts over the last few weeks, decided to sleep on it. At 1.55am Wednesday 19th May I woke up with a jolt as my waters literally burst all over the place. I managed eventually to wake my husband up who had fallen asleep on the sofa downstairs and after a massive clean up operation we called our midwife Valerie and she came out straight away.

The contractions had stopped but restarted around 3am and were roughly every 3 mins, reasonably painful (a 5-6) but not lasting too long. We all tried to get some sleep at 6am, but the contractions slowed down a lot. By the time my kids woke up and we had agreed they could take the day off school, they were back to quite painful and we all thought finally 'this is it!'. By about 9.30am I got into the birth

pool my husband had busied himself filling and my labour ground to a halt and slowed down. My parents came and took the kids out for lunch as it was my Dads birthday, and gave me a bit of space and peace. At 1pm-ish we asked Valerie to examine me and I was disappointed to find I was barely dilated, and all that pain and hard work had merely helped Harlow to get into a better position. Valerie left for home and me and Adam went for a walk, had some lunch and then at 5.20pm decided to get some sleep. My kids were sent off to their rooms to watch a film.

At this point I was feeling despondent and was sure my pain threshold was rubbish. I started soon after to get contractions every 8-9 mins, lasting almost 2 mins and they were really painful. The peaks seemed to last for 40 seconds before subsiding. By almost 7pm I was crying and convinced I was still about 3 cm dilated. I got very emotional and was convinced I would end up in hospital with a c-section. Adam was amazing and really supported me. He suggested we call Valerie, who had just text me. She came out with the entonox and as soon as she arrived I was getting the urge to push. I was on all fours and could not move into any other position...how I got downstairs I have no idea!!!

I managed to get downstairs and Adam re-filled the pool which we had drained down partially earlier. I got in, and contractions were very close, strong and the peak lasted ages. Adam was great and helped me get the gas and air when I needed it, and provided emotional support as well as an arm for me to dig my nails in (sorry Adam!!), and Valerie helped me to get past the panicky 'I cant do this' with encouragement that I could really trust in. At 8.20pm I could feel Harlow move down and he was born in the birth pool at 8.40pm. Valerie had called my kids down and they both watched their little brothers entrance into the world.

Harlow was born behind me, so with some jiggling I was able to climb over my cord and hold him. He cried a little and had a feed quite soon afterwards. He was covered in vernix and his skin felt so soft. He looked just like 3d scan picture and apparently my first words were 'Hello Harlow'. Adam cut the cord after it stopped pulsating and Valerie tied the cord with a cord tie I made specially for the event, and as I delivered the placenta naturally an hour later, Adam, and the kids had all taken turns to hold Harlow and make their introductions. It was the most special sight ever and something they will never forget, nor will I.

At 10.30pm we sent the kids to bed, and after a glass of champagne with Valerie; myself, Adam and Harlow settled down for our first night together. Perfect.

We were all a bit shocked that Harlow tipped the scales at 10lb 6oz, and I got away with a tiny tear and a graze and no stitches!! It was a more painful labour than Nayts birth, and the longest overall labour, but an amazing experience that 5 days after the event makes me ask 'when can I do it again'???