

The Birth of Zoe Willow at home on 15th September 2006 – by Ely Morgan

My first baby had been ten days early, so when my due date approached, and then passed, I was really surprised. I started worrying about inductions and eating pineapple and curry. I had quite strong Braxton Hicks contractions one night but after a few hours it all stopped, so I'd got all excited and missed most of a night's sleep for nothing!

Six days after my due date I started feeling something going on. I had a pretty good feeling it was labour, but because of my false start the week before I wanted to be sure so kept quiet until it was properly established. We took the dog for a walk and by the time we came home I was having to stop for the contractions. Simon gave Pippa (2 ½) her tea and bath and got her into bed while I retreated to my bedroom to lean on the bed and sometimes against the chest of drawers, trying to keep moving. As with my previous labour, contractions were coming quickly with little time to rest between them. I also had some diarrhoea and vomiting followed by a show.

I was desperately trying to get hold of my sister as she said she'd come over and look after Pippa if she should happen to wake up. But tonight was the one night she'd gone off to watch a film with a friend.

At 7pm Simon suggested the TENS machine and strapped it on for me. Having the button to press really helped me to feel a bit in control, carry on moving and be in a good position. He had also called the midwife, Val, who said she'd be on her way. He was then busy getting the birth pool ready – boiling lots of pans of water.

Val arrived at 8pm and after listening to the baby's heartbeat she helped me to move downstairs as the pool was ready and I wanted to get in. Taking the TENS machine off was a little difficult as I adjusted to let the water do the pain relief instead – but at least it proved the TENS machine was working!

I found kneeling, leaning against the side of the pool the most comfortable position. There were handles on the side, which were great for holding on to and I pushed my face into the sides of the blow-up pool during contractions. Simon rubbed my back with each contraction so that I could push back into his hands which I found very helpful, although I did end up with a very sore back.

Just after 9pm, the second midwife, Michelle, arrived, followed quarter of an hour later by my sister who had left the cinema early and hared over to be with me. Despite all the commotion of new people I didn't really notice them much. I felt very cocooned and protected in my pool and although I had to move sometimes so that Val could use the monitor to check the baby, I felt that I had my own space.

Although I was having strong, regular contractions I was very conscious that I didn't want to push if my body wasn't ready. Although I hadn't torn when I gave birth to Pippa, I was told I was extremely lucky not to have done, as I had pushed past a contraction to get her out, impatient to get the pain finished with. So I wanted to take things very slowly and really just let my body do all the hard work. I was amazed at how confident I was this time round. I recognised all the stages and knew I'd be able to deal with it. Whereas with Pippa my words were mainly "Oh my God, oh my God!" this time it was "come on baby, you can do it!". On the down side, I was finding that I didn't get much of a respite from the pain in between contractions which was tiring and with each contraction I found I was lifting my right leg right up. When Zoe's head appeared we could see she had her hand by the side of her face which we think explains both the pain in between contractions and the leg lifting as I tried to give her as much space as possible.

I was also more confident to reach down and try to touch the baby as she emerged, stroking the top of her head as finally at 11.40 the head was delivered very slowly and carefully. It was much less painful than first time round and I had felt really in control.

With her head poking out I then turned round into a semi-reclining position to deliver the body. I was feeling very relaxed about it all, but the midwives were keen for me to finish the job and suggested holding my legs so that I could brace against them to push her out with the next contraction. And so it was that at 11.44 my baby was born. She had a perfect 10 apgar score.

I scooped her up into my arms and cuddled her while Simon put his arms around us both. I felt elated and exquisitely happy to have my little baby and it wasn't for a few minutes that I wanted to stop cuddling her and look to see if she was a boy or a girl.

Quarter of an hour later I delivered the placenta with a natural third stage. A few minutes later Simon cut the cord and I got out of the pool to cuddle up on the sofa with little Zoe to try and get her to have a feed. Everyone bustled around tidying up and getting things to eat while I sat focusing on my little baby. Eventually I was ready to give her up to get her weighed and we were all staggered to find that she was 10lb 2oz. And my perineum was in tact!

By 2am the midwives and my sister had gone and we were tucked up in bed together – shattered but elated. And in the morning when Pippa woke up we were able to present her with her baby sister.

I found giving birth to Zoe a wonderfully fulfilling experience. To be able to hand over control to my body and let it calmly deliver such a big baby made me feel like superwoman. But I know that I owe being able to do that to being at home, having a really supportive husband and a midwife who was unintrusive and who I knew and trusted. I really wish that more women could have the benefit of these conditions for their births.

If you want to find out more about homebirth you can join in with the NCT homebirth support group. We meet once a month to share experiences of homebirth and provide information to enable women to make an informed choice about whether homebirth is a good option for them. Call me on 01525 222144 for details, or just to chat about homebirth.