

Grace's birth story

Mum had to come and help with Lila on the Tuesday as I had no energy and Dave was working in Chester. I remember panicking as to how I was going to handle the labour when I felt so weak. But I woke up feeling fine (as I had done for most of the final weeks of my pregnancy) on the Wednesday.

I went for a nap when Lila did and was woken by some twinges but they were so minor I thought I was probably just imagining them. I came down and told Dave who I think knew labour was starting. Like Lila's labour, I was in denial although this was not at all conscious. I was therefore relaxed and unworried.

I finished the internet shop and Dave and Lila went to the park and brought back chocolate muffins and a scented candle. Dave decided we should take Lila to Mum's after we'd had our tea. I thought it was a false alarm but we agreed it would either be a good practice for Lila or, if it was the real thing, less unsettling for her to stay at Granny's, which she was used to, than for her to wake up with Granny being here. Also we didn't want to worry about disturbing Lila as I was wandering around having surges.

I had a surge in the kitchen at Mum's and in the car there and back, probably about every 15 minutes. Dad was out and Mum wanted me to wait and see him but I didn't want him to panic and then panic us. At this stage the surges just felt like cramps. Bad enough to make me breath through them but not very painful or long lasting.

I probably realised I was in labour as we drove out of Lockerley. I felt really upset at leaving Lila and had a moment of fear about what lay ahead and whether I would be ok for Lila's sake. I'd had a similar tearful moment at the beginning of Lila's labour. This was the only time I felt frightened throughout the labour.

We watched the football when we got home, it was a world cup semi final, Spain v Germany. At this point the surges stopped and I thought it was a false alarm. We went to bed but once we turned the lights out I realised they were coming regularly again and that I wouldn't be able to sleep. We came downstairs and I lay on the sofa breathing through the surges, really concentrating on trying to relax all the muscles in my body.

I think between surges we talked. We tried to watch 27 Dresses but I was comfier lying down for the surges and felt I needed to concentrate on them and not the film.

By midnight the surges were coming at least every 6 minutes. I wanted to get to the hospital in a bit more time than with Lila so we called the hospital. They were quiet and the pool was currently free. Dave ran around upstairs packing a few last things with me shouting instructions. And getting the peanut butter sandwiches I had made out of the freezer! While he was rushing around the surges seemed to stop again but I remember I had one as soon as he came back into the lounge.

The last surge we recorded at home was at 01.04. I think we arrived at the hospital at around 3 am. I remember having surges in the car but feeling pretty calm and composed. When we got to the hospital I insisted Dave pay for parking and I waited until I had a surge before getting out. Once we were inside the hospital, I had another surge and lay down on a row of seats during it. Two midwives ran down with towels, they must have seen me walk in and thought delivery was imminent. I apologised for alarming them and said I thought I wasn't that near to delivery and that we'd wanted to come in plenty of time, ha. I was introduced to a midwife and her trainee and we went to the pool room.

When the midwife examined me she muttered a medical term and disappeared off to get a colleague. Dave and I were anxious as we hadn't understood what she meant but thankfully very quickly she returned with her colleague. She examined me and confirmed I was 9 cm dilated. The first midwife had thought she'd felt the baby's head but had wanted a colleague to check. Dave and I were thrilled and very surprised as I felt so much calmer than at 9cm with Lila. I think there were only about 1 or 2 surges throughout the whole labour where I felt out of control or frightened.

I got into the pool which was boiling hot. I was really trying to stay in control at this point as I felt I had lost control in the last hour of Lila's labour. Like with Lila, my waters hadn't broken so I thought we would still be a good hour. I asked Dave to read one of the hypnobirthing pieces that I found motivating and I tried to focus on that between surges. But it was only about 25 minutes before Grace was born (Dave recorded surges at 3.12, 3.16 and 3.21). From the noises I was making the midwife advised that I could push and on about the third surge in the water, Grace's head came out. I was on all fours but the midwife advised I had to

lie backwards so Dave held me under my arms and on the next surge Grace was born. Such a relief! The midwife brought Grace up out of the water and on to me.

I stayed in the water I think for about five minutes. And then we both got out. After I delivered the placenta, we were left snuggled up on the bed, feeling quite clean after being in the water. Grace latched on straight away and ferociously. Dave made us cups of tea and I ate my sandwich and chocolate muffin. I felt shaky and my body overwhelmed with the adrenalin and exertion.

We were left for about an hour and then the midwife came in to weigh Grace. She confirmed we would be able to leave once the paperwork was processed rather than go to the ward. I had a shower and Dave snoozed a bit in his chair. It was around 7 am when we left. A hazy early morning, when you know it's going to be a very hot day. Grace cried all the way home which wasn't surprising given the sudden change of scene! We moved her cot into our bedroom and Grace and I went to sleep for a few hours before sending out the text message. Dave slept downstairs. At teatime Mum and Dad brought Lila home to meet her little sister. I felt fantastic. I remember making Mum and Dad tea and Mum saying "You shouldn't be doing that, you've just had a baby!"