



Client Birth Story

Kerrie's Story

At 38 weeks we thought things were happening; I had the 'show', cramps, backache etc and with it being 2 weeks before the 'due date' we were in two minds; really excited but also apprehensive as we were still in the midst of a worldwide pandemic and my gut instinct was for baba to stay put as long as possible (protection mode!). Little did I know, we were going to take that to the extreme ...

Things didn't progress at 38 weeks so I continued on the pregnancy journey, which I absolutely loved; I had a very active pregnancy and was very fortunate that I felt on top of the world for most of it.

We got close to the 'due date' and the midwife started priming me about induction. I couldn't believe we were having this conversation even before the EDD and I reiterated that I wanted to stick with a natural birth and onset of labour unless there was a medical need to move things along. She said that the NHS guideline was to induce 12 days after the due date but I just brushed it off as I was sure it wouldn't come to going past that and that baby would be here any time.

I carried on going to my antenatal appointments and each time I was being asked to book closer together appointments and the pressure to book an induction was more intense. Knowing myself and how I react to things, I knew booking an induction and hoping I wouldn't need it would actually hold things up and cause me stress and anxiety with this looming deadline. I didn't book an induction and continued to hope baby would arrive before the 12 day guideline, purely because of the stress of going outside of the NHS recommendation and the pressure to conform to this, not because I had any reason to worry. I tried everything on the 'how to induce labour naturally' list but the days continued to pass by.

I hit the 12 day mark and baby still hadn't arrived. Each night I started going to bed with signs (mainly back ache and cramps) but I'd wake up in the morning and nothing had happened, it was the most deflating feeling. As much as we were both feeling increasingly stressed from the pressure to be induced and all of the guidelines being repeated to me again and again at the appointments I still had to attend alone throughout this time, we made the decision to continue to wait as there were no signs that anything was wrong and my gut instinct was that baby and I were both fine. I just knew I had to remain calm just like I was through my pregnancy to ensure my blood pressure didn't rise and baby didn't get stressed.

We then had letters from the NHS using recorded delivery outlining the risks we were taking (but with no references to where these stats were from). After spending literally hours and hours researching every day we had luckily already read these stats on the AIMS website, a brilliant website for accurate and unbiased information, and knew that they'd been presented to us in a particularly biased way and that these carefully selected stats weren't the whole story. Induction itself carries its risks yet this is never highlighted and there's very little information on it. AIMS gave us the confidence to continue to wait as their full data showed less stillbirths at 40+ weeks than at weeks 37, 38 & 39. There wouldn't have been a problem had I gone into labour on one of these weeks as the NHS deem them to be full term but the research they were presenting us to try and show us that past 42 weeks we were high risk actually showed that the rates before 40 weeks were much higher. I've since revisited AIMS and they have some vast new data which shows that the risk of stillbirth and perinatal mortality rates actually significantly decreases at 42+ weeks.

Still feeling well and baby doing well, we continued to wait. Past the 12 days, the hospital was insistent I go in for monitoring every day. The hospital is over an hour away from us, it was the last place I wanted to be spending time (whitecoat syndrome and worldwide pandemic!) and, as they kept telling me to try and encourage an induction; the monitoring is only good for that period of time being monitored, things could change straight after. After feeling so upset after each midwife appointment where I was repeatedly told my baby could die and I was putting him/her at risk, I decided that the level of stress this monitoring was going to cause me was going to further place me into fight or flight mode and delay my body from bringing on labour naturally. I explained this on a number of occasions but none of the medical staff recognised this as a factor that could be delaying things, they responded as though I was some sort of earth mother who was putting both of our lives at risk unnecessary and selfishly just for 'the birth I wanted'.

I decided to go in for monitoring as and when I felt I wanted some reassurance but also requested further ultrasounds to check the health of my placenta and the amniotic fluid levels after reading the hospital's 30 page guidance with their own recommendations where this was suggested but hadn't been offered. We were now at almost 3 weeks past the due date, something I never thought would happen. Both additional ultrasounds had showed my placenta and fluid levels were just as healthy as that of a 37 week pregnancy, which although I knew things could change at any time, confirmed to me that I should go with my instinct which was to continue to wait. I knew that even if I did opt for an induction, if my body wasn't ready it may not work. I also knew that once I had started this medical process I would be under the hospital's timescales and this could quickly end up with me having a very medical birth if I was ramped up through their system because things weren't happening in line with their ideals.

I continued to try everything to bring on labour, eventually being recommended a Cranial Osteopath. From my in depth research (you could say bordering on extreme!) I became aware that issues with the pelvic alignment can delay the natural onset of labour. I had suffered a coccyx injury in 2014 and had struggled with lower back issues ever since so clinging on to every last hope that my body wasn't broken and I would eventually go into labour, I went to see a specialist. I was so thankful she was allowed to stay open during lockdown as there were so many things I would have tried (chiropractor, massage, reflexology, acupuncture) much earlier on had I been able to. My first session with the Osteopath was one of the few times I had spoken to a medical professional who actually believed there could be a seemingly unrelated issue that was stopping my body from starting the process naturally. Once she examined me she was very aware that my coccyx had undergone a trauma and that working on this would likely help things. She said that it may mean my body starts to go into labour any time soon or we

may need another session before that time as the area had been damaged for a long time. I ended up going back for one more session that week and during the treatment the osteopath said 'I think your body is going into labour'. I was so excited and she just seemed so sure that I was inclined to believe her. Over the next few days I did feel signs but again I started going to bed and the signs would be gone in the morning but begin developing over the course of the day.

At 43 weeks and 2 days now, I was feeling many different emotions but 2 complete contrasting ones in the most part; one side of me was saying why isn't my body doing this, am I doing the right thing and the other side was saying you know what to do, you know you and baby are healthy, stay strong and go with for what's right for you. We had some pressing matters that we had put off for these 3 weeks now, like moving all of our belongings out of our old house, and after our daily 7km+ walk we decided to just go and get it done. It was about 4pm and I spent 5 and a half hours clearing and packing my entire wardrobe and belongings up. We got back home, had some dinner quickly and got ready for bed - exhausted! My back started really hurting and I put it down to the fact we'd just done all of this packing and even whilst not being over 43 weeks pregnant my back would hurt. Just before I went to bed, our dog Albert wanted to go out to the loo (bare with me this addition to this story isn't completely irrelevant!) so I let him out and he ran off ... which he never does. I had to go outside to try and get him back in, he'd gone to the car park and I just couldn't understand what was wrong with him. Eventually getting him back inside and going to bed, I started shaking in waves of more intensity on my back ache. I soon started to think I was contracting (we now believe Albert knew and was telling us to get in the car!). My husband said he thought I might just be exhausted and not feeling well so to try and get some sleep. After a few minutes and feeling completely different to any back ache before, I realised this was the contractions. They were intense straight away and really close together, I just had this overwhelming desire to go downstairs and get in the pool. We had previously started to rethink our homebirth plan because I was so late now and because of all of the scaremongering we'd endured from all angles but there was no way I was sitting in the car and heading to hospital, I was making my way to the birthing pool (luckily we'd left it set up!). Things were progressing really quickly and I was telling my husband to call triage again and check they're on their way. They were rather rude to him and told him it was my first baby so there's no rush and that basically he didn't have a clue (luckily he didn't share this with me at the time!). My husband continued boiling the stove top kettle, measuring the temperature of the pool and filling it up with more hot water (not the ideal kettle for this job for future reference!).

When the midwives eventually arrived, they asked to perform all of their checks and an internal examination to see how far along I was. I let them check baby's heart rate, my heart rate and blood pressure but declined the internal examination because I didn't want to have any timescale pressures and didn't want to be deflated if I hadn't dilated much between each examination. As much as my surges were very intense and very frequent, my breathing was controlled using the 4 in 8 out and I was in my own world. The midwives and my husband were commenting on how calm I seemed. Things had started to slow down when the midwives arrived (according to my husband - I was definitely in my own world and don't remember this) and as the hours passed by it became quite clear to my husband that I was exhausted and so he tried to get me to have some food and drink. This made me really sick. It may have been because of the gas and air that I'd started using but one thing was for sure, I couldn't eat or drink anything. My body was running out of steam and my husband kept trying to convince me to take a nap. I was adamant that this wasn't necessary and I don't think the midwives took this idea seriously either. Eventually, I gave in and tried to nap through the surges. I dozed on and off not really getting much sleep but having a lie down which did seem to help give my body the energy to continue. A few hours went by again and the midwives were on the phone to a doctor on the maternity ward, the doctor had spoken to

the midwives and then wanted to speak to my husband. The doctor was telling my husband that we should go into hospital because I was over 3 weeks overdue and this would be the best option. He now tells me they were throwing the failure to progress term around a lot. He asked if anything had changed that meant we were at more risk now than before and she said no. He declined her request and came back to support me (I wouldn't let him go throughout the whole thing so having our bubble interrupted by these calls was frustrating me). The doctor called back and asked to speak to me, this is a part of the story my husband re-enacts quite frequently as he says it was hilarious; I apparently asked him if he'd already spoken to the doctor and that there was no need for me to go anywhere and he said yes and apparently I turned to the midwife and with all my might I let out a loud guttural NOOOO and the midwife quickly said to the doctor "she doesn't want to speak to you at the moment." I remember just calmly saying no but apparently it was said with quite the power that was completely out of the calm own world state I had been in. Instinctively, this doctor was interrupting my safe and calm place and that must have struck a nerve!

The midwives had changed shift since the morning, one midwife was not impressed with the situation and the other really respected our choices and let us continue as per our birth plan (hands off and be there to help if necessary). All monitoring continued to be fine but I was getting really deflated and saying I couldn't do it anymore. After a talk with the midwife I got on well with at about 12 hours in I allowed an internal examination to try and give me some hope ... I was 9.5cm! She found my waters still hadn't broken and said this may be what is holding things up so I allowed her to break them.

This gave me a real push knowing I was really close now and our baby would be here soon. I somehow found the energy to continue after hearing this positive news but the longer things went on the more frustrated I was getting that 'it just wasn't working!' What felt like hours and hours went by and I accepted another internal examination - 10cm ... yes! Carrying on in my zone, frustrated and desperate to try anything to help at this stage, but still in my own world and not really aware of anybody other than Andy and I in the room, the midwives suggested I get out of the birthing pool as this could be slowing things down. Knowing I was now fully dilated, they asked if I was getting an urge to push but I wasn't. I was just feeling a huge amount of pressure on my coccyx that I couldn't seem to get past. What was strange was I hadn't at all got the urge to 'bare down' like many people talk of and I'd expected. They suggested I try to go to the loo to see if this helped with the pressure and I vividly remember just sitting on the loo in despair, really losing energy and feeling like nothing was working. Rosie had come to do a check on baby and, as much as I must have still been in my own world because I don't remember being panicked by this at the time and didn't really take in the information, she couldn't find a heartbeat or pulse. I remember her telling me I really needed to push now and that I was really close. I was on all fours and her and Andy told me I needed to 'beat the bus' and push with all my might. They were so encouraging really cheering me on, I vividly remember this and feeling so supported. I think this is when I became aware that an ambulance had been called, but again I don't think I had fully processed why so luckily still remaining calm, I just thought it was because things were taking such a long time. Rosie and Andy were literally cheering me, looking for baby's head and getting so excited every time they could see it. Their dedication to getting baby out and sending the ambulance away was the most encouraging thing in the world and I really was determined. I'll always remember Andy shouting at the top of his lungs how amazing I was and how much he loved me. I was pushing with all of my might and they were telling me baby was coming! Suddenly I remember being told that I needed to move to the bed and they needed to get baby out ASAP. They asked to perform an episiotomy and I said that was fine (I now know it was because Andy and Rosie had spotted a hand resting on baby's head while I was pushing!). They laid me down on the bed and performed the episiotomy, I didn't feel a thing. Next, I was told that they needed to perform a technique

that would reduce the risk of shoulder dystocia because I was so overdue and baby was likely on the larger side because of this. I agreed and before I knew it my leg was plunged into the air and there he was, a beautiful baby boy! I couldn't believe he was finally here. Andy had announced he was a boy which was lovely and we laid him on my tummy so he could find his way to my breast for milk. The most surreal feeling in the world. We laid all together taking it all in and let our (not so little) baby boy have his milk and snuggles with us skin to skin.

After quite a while, Andy cut the cord and baby was weighed - 10lb 7! What a whopper. I felt fine but I had lost quite a lot of blood and when I stood up I was quite light headed. The midwife suggested it may be an option to go to hospital just to make sure I was all ok but she was sure all was fine. They let me continue resting for a while to see how I was but eventually the midwife made a deal with me that we could have our own room in the hospital and they'd make sure we could have a shower, some food and support with feeding etc. They insisted we go by ambulance so we caused a bit of worry in our village when everybody saw the ambulance arrive but when they saw all 3 of us getting in they were cheering and so excited. I wasn't keen on being in an ambulance carrying my new little bundle on a stretcher in the back whilst being so exhausted after a 15 hour labour but at this point I remember feeling like I could do anything. I was put on a drip on arrival to rehydrate my body but all of the checks on my iron levels showed that I had more than enough iron so everything else was ok. Andy had passed out on the floor making a bed with my coat and baby was next to me in a cot but I kept bringing him in to bed with me for cuddles despite being connected to the drip machine.

We were asked to leave the hospital at a barmy 2am with no car seat, car or any way of getting home because of lockdown so I said we couldn't leave yet and the midwife told me I could go to the ward and Andy would have to go home. Being on a ward on my own was what I had feared all along so this just wasn't an option for me,, especially as I didn't need to be there. Andy is a pretty heavy sleeper and there was no way I was waking him so I just went back to sleep and we were woken up at 5am and again asked to leave. Eventually finding out that the only way we could get home (an hour away) was by taxi as taxis don't require baby seats. I remember being in such a daze after still barely any sleep and just holding on to my little baby for dear life the whole way home!

It's taken me so long to write this (William is almost 7 months now!) because it just seemed like I couldn't condense the story - it really is far too long so apologies for that, there was an extra 3 weeks lead up to fit in! I also didn't seem to remember big chunks because I was in my own little zone thanks to Hypnobirthing, but what I do vividly remember is feeling that both of us were so knowledgeable, in control and that my husband 100% had my back throughout the whole thing. So much so I physically wouldn't let him go during my labour because I didn't want to be interrupted in my zone and I knew he was able to communicate all of what we'd discussed and decided without me needing to. Terri helped to give us the confidence to know that every single aspect of our journey was just that, our journey, and our decisions. She was there even after the course to listen to my concerns and worries about being 'overdue' and always managed to be a voice of reason and calm. The medical profession can be a bit of an intimidating thing and with our knowledge and empowerment from Terri we came away from the course feeling ready to enjoy, embrace and stand up for what we believed in - the power to make our own decisions and not be bullied into doing anything else. We have a healthy, calm and beautiful little boy that I'm so grateful had a natural arrival to the world and lots of relaxed skin to skin time with us both when he finally arrived. Those moments still feel so surreal now, treasure every second.

Andy's 'Dad's eye view' of our Birth Story!

43+ 2 Weeks

After reading all we could find on pregnancy and child birth my wife and I couldn't wait to meet our little baby, during the pregnancy we attended a hypnobirthing course at Cornwall hypnobirthing (pre covid) Although this taught us many things one thing that stuck in both of our minds was the importance of patience, oh boy did we need that!

The elephant in the room during our pregnancy was Covid 19 and so I'll touch on that because if and when it all goes away there were benefits from it that maybe useful to others. Obviously what happened world wide was tragic but in my opinion there was only a few negative ways it affected us. The biggest of these downsides being I could no longer accompany my wife to the midwife appointments or her final scan. I just got to sit in the carpark and wait for her like a lemon. I wasn't upset for me at all just felt a bit useless and for a man that's not how we want to feel. Other than that, the reduction in available distractions and our seriously reduced social circle all played into our hands meaning the two of us got some much needed rest and time together, I was stressed at work (we both run our own businesses) but my wife was incredibly understanding of that and certainly in the final 6 weeks of the pregnancy all this seemed to bring us closer together. The only other way in which Covid changed our plan is that we had originally planned to go to the birth centre in Truro but at around 35 weeks we decided we felt more comfortable having the baby at home, this is something we had considered before but Covid gave us the final push we needed and I'm glad it did. Only slight issue is our home is a bit of a building site, 300 years old with narrow stairs and has terrible access, needless to say our less than supportive midwife was not impressed. Never ones to be easily swayed, we made our decision and we stuck to it. I think it's fair to say that it was after this that the less than satisfactory care we had received from our midwife went further down hill, more on that later.

After what can only be described as a beautiful pregnancy with minimal discomfort and sickness we both arrived at 37 weeks fresh faced and perhaps too ready. At 38 weeks my wife got "the show" and we both had a gut feeling the baby was on its way, in what in hindsight could now be seen as a silly move we jumped in the car and picked up the last few things on our list and ended up being busy all day, long story short, the baby didn't come, if nothing else though, it brought it home that it could be any time now.

Hypnobirthing had made us very excited about our birth and although there is always trepidation I personally felt very confident in my role as birth partner, it was so clear in my mind what I needed to do that I could clearly visualise it. I think that is probably worth doing for any birth partner who hasn't been at a birth before, unbeknown to my wife I spent a fair bit of time visualising a not so successful birth also but always with the desired outcome, this gave me confidence I could cope if things did go wrong but I was careful not to discuss that with my wife as what you visualise has a habit of becoming a reality. I'm very practically minded so knew I would need a gauge on which to base any decisions, I chose heart rate and blood pressure and decided that regardless of time, changes in these would be the only time I would consider a change of plan. This did cause me a slight panic at one stage that perhaps I should have prepared better for but we'll come to that later.

Once we hit 40 weeks we were really hopeful of an arrival soon but knew that it could be a lot longer so we needed to stay calm, this is where the obsessive fact finding on stats came in as we had been warned that pressure from the medics to be induced would become more and more intense. At around 40+2 my

wife had another appointment with her midwife, she didn't get the support she needed just offered a "sweep" as if it was a werthers original and a lecture about late babies. Also told the baby was back to back but with no advice on how they may be turned, we also now know the baby likely went back to back as a result of sitting with her feet up to reduce swelling (Midwife's orders) She left in tears and I was angry!

Needless to say we didn't hurry to make another appointment with our current midwife. All her checks had been great and we knew that a baby is not overdue until 42 weeks, we also knew that dating scans are not that accurate (although there haven't been many studies) the only one we could find said +/- 15 days, we also had a suspicion that our date was 10 days out. I should say here that I'm sure in certain situations our midwife was very capable however we found her to not be interested in facts (something very important to my wife) and to be quite robotic, we just didn't click and definitely should have changed sooner.

At 42 weeks our research suggested that two areas of concern are amniotic fluid levels and the ageing placenta (although there is no real evidence of the latter) a quick scan of the NHS guidance said we were entitled to, and encouraged to have a couple scans a week and hence on the Sunday of 42 I took my wife in for a check up and she booked a scan, My wife was given the litigation "against guidelines" talk and it was agreed that this would not be mentioned again, they said they would send evidence to back up their guidelines (ironically in the post, if they really wanted us to have it they would have been emailed it but this was purely a litigation action which I entirely understand albeit a little insensitive) they wanted us to have check ups everyday but that wasn't for us, we live too far away and our priority was staying chilled but we did stick to the scans, thankfully the results were good but after the first scan, Kerrie was encouraged to go and see the midwife, BIG MISTAKE. This was the second time she left in floods of tears, I can't tell you how angry I was that someone who's job it is to support the mother would do this for a second time. To cut a long story short she told my extremely well researched and highly intellectual wife that our baby might die if they weren't induced and it wasn't a time to be 'selfish' she failed to provide any evidence for this scare mongering and pretty much wouldn't let her leave until she accepted she was being selfish.

The good news is that this spurred an action that I implore others to take much sooner, our midwife had to go (sadly not into retirement but at least out of our lives) we wrote a letter to the head of midwifery asking for a change and we were rewarded with a very warm and supportive reply that reinstated our faith in the system, we had to go through the legal stuff again but done in a much more professional manner. It was at this time the "evidence" arrived in the post, strangely a child at school wouldn't get away with stating a fact without referencing its origin or giving a full picture but the NHS do. Their data seemed to match a study that had given us great confidence that we read on the AIMS website (well worth a visit) but the NHS info was not placed in context, namely that your baby is at far more risk at being born at 38 weeks than they are at 42...albeit 42 is slightly higher risk than 40. Basically there is very little evidence and that really adds to the confusion. GO WITH YOUR GUT and know that induction and C section come with great risks that in our opinion outweighed waiting.

These 3 weeks from 40 were hard, we live in a small village, everywhere we went we were continually asked, when are "they" going to induce you, as if we had no choice in the matter. When we summoned the energy to explain our reasons people were generally supportive but it was exhausting, definitely not what you need before going into the biggest day of your life. My advice would be pick a birth month and

don't utter a date because as soon as you do, you have applied pressure that you really don't want or need!

On top of the stress of being supposedly "overdue" we had some dormant stresses regarding our home come to light, two separate highly stressful incidents that meant that at 43+1 my wife and I were essentially moving house until 10pm at night, 12500 steps and 42 flights climbed later (my wife's watch told us) we went to bed physically and emotionally exhausted...only issue being our little one had other ideas, our heads finally hit the pillow at 11:30 and my wife started to complain of back pain, she suffers from that a lot, I jokingly text a work colleague saying either she was in labour or her back was out as a result of moving house at 43 weeks pregnant.

10 minutes later, another pain, 8 minutes after that another, then 6 minutes then 4 minutes then constantly every 2 minutes for 40 seconds. Both my mum and my wife's mum had fast labours and hence we called the midwife and my wife said there was no time to get to hospital we would have the baby at home. This was met with some distain by the lady in triage who no doubt knew our case as the "awkward ones" by this time. She also assured me that the baby would not arrive quickly and although I have my own theory on this, she turned out to be absolutely correct. She did tell me that she wasn't allowed in the pool until a midwife got there....oops too late!

About 2 hours in, the Midwife's turned up and my wife's contractions slowed to every 5 minutes but still intense. I'm not sure on midwife protocol but it seems there is one lead and one note taker/auxiliary. In our case the lead was a lady called Liz and she was amazing. She understood hypnobirthing and gave all information to me to pass onto Kerrie while I supported her. She pretty much left us to it as my wife was in such great control, no screaming just utter focus! I'm sure they say it to everyone but I believed Liz when she praised my wife for how she was coping it was unreal and much of that has to be put down to the hypnobirthing course that although we didn't practice too much we did understand and agree with the premise. It was just like the videos they showed us to prove that labour doesn't have to be traumatic! She was really doing it and my pride was overflowing.

The first and in my opinion the only hurdle was lurking in the wings from before the start and that was exhaustion, she had no sleep and couldn't take on food or water, this started to really show itself about 5 hours in, contractions were still regular but they were weaker, I know my wife and I knew she was tired. I knew again from hypnobirthing that there was nothing stopping her lying down and taking a rest, nothing that is apart from my wife's stubbornness, when she starts something she wants to finish it, as seen by the house clearance the night before!

I was by her side throughout and definitely did not feel like a spare part, keeping the pool at temp was a full time job and if I moved more than 12 inches from my wife she clearly told me I was not to move! I too was exhausted and started to wonder how she could possibly keep going. I was immensely proud to overhear during the 8am handover of the Midwives that I was doing a great job they could leave me to it and just monitor!

About 10 hours in with an old school midwife in the wings (not in the room) and a typical know it all Dr on the phone, murmurs of transfer to hospital set in, my wife wasn't having examinations and hence they could only guess but the words "failure to progress" were thrown around by "Mrs old school". Luckily our new primary midwife, like Liz had been, was amazing and we privately chatted about bullying my wife into taking a rest.

After some cajoling and promises (guesses) that the labour would be quicker in the long run I managed to help her out of the pool and into the bed, she wasn't happy about it but after a lot of extreme offshore sailing I knew the power of even 2 minutes of sleep, she rested for about 20 minutes and probably slept for about 8 minutes between contractions, In hindsight I should have strapped her to the bed but as she rested the contractions grew in strength again and my wife was eager to get going, back in the pool she went and another few hours went by, she still didn't have the energy to progress and I knew she needed more rest but this was a harder sell the second time. She was getting pretty disheartened by this point though and knowing my wife and knowing how her brain works I gave her two options, one was rest, the other was a trip to hospital and potentially a c-section. She agreed to rest again and this time I stood fast and made sure she laid there for the best part of an hour, she was uncomfortable and only sleeping for seconds between contractions but in bed you are not holding your body and hence your muscles get a chance to recover. In hindsight I should have got her to rest as soon as her contractions slowed but hey hindsight is a wonderful thing and we all make mistakes.

The next stage is where in some ways we departed from hypnobirthing a bit and I suppose got a bit of luck just when we needed it. My wife was so tired she was clutching at straws really and after probably 12 hours of saying no to examinations she agreed to have one as she really had no idea how close (or far) she was. Rosie the midwife was great and really put her mind at rest telling she was leading the exam and it could stop at any time. I'm not a religious man but thank god, she was 9.5cm dilated (I suspect she had been near that for the last 10 hours)

Her waters had also not broken and although I normally wouldn't agree with them breaking them, in this instance I didn't see it could do anything but help, there was thick with meconium but that's to be expected with a baby 3 weeks over so it didn't worry anyone, although it did give Mrs Old school another excuse for a hospital transfer lecture.

Overall this news gave my wife just that little bit more fight she needed that she could still do it, I don't know where she summoned it but she found some energy and although things didn't happen as quick as she hoped after about 90 mins she agreed to a second exam "Mrs Old School" was in the room now and she was so keen on calling an ambulance that I wasn't completely sure she would admit it if Kerrie was fully dilated. Once again luck (and an monumental effort from my wife) was on our side and she was fully dilated. Again this somehow meant she found a little more energy.

Mrs Old School directed her to push whilst holding her breath, I disagreed and told Kerrie to do as she felt, this did not go down very well and I have to say I don't think Mrs old school likes me!

She did push and with all her might, now I will never know if this departure from the hypnobirthing method was what turned things into a minor emergency or if perhaps that would have happened anyway...as I said before my chosen metric which was heart rate and blood pressure and it had not wavered throughout on mum or baby...until now! Suddenly our superstar Rosie couldn't find a pulse and when she occasionally did it was very weak and slow. I'm pretty experienced at faking calm but I can honestly say I was panicking. Mrs old school finally got her wish to call an ambulance and myself and superstar Rosie set about, as she put it, beating the bus. Neither of us had ever coached a football team but with all the whoops and cheers you wouldn't know it, as stated before my wife tops the stubbornness charts and she wasn't about to get into an ambulance unless she had to! Slow and steady progress was made and hope was regaining, I have no idea how long this took, it felt like 3 minutes but could have easily been 30! Once the head was visible we could also see a hand, just to make things more difficult. 🙄 Due to this and a lack of heart rate and various other factors mainly relating to an overdue

baby we agreed to an epiziotomie, it was quick and painless and immediately helped progress, next issue, shoulder dystocia, again common in post date babies but potentially dangerous. Credit where it's due, Mrs Old School and Teresa (our lovely auxiliary midwife) sprung into action with a manoeuvre called McRoberts, not exactly delicate but highly effective, especially if you are interested in hydraulics. I have since googled it and found that not everyone does it with such force but I'm not complaining, with the second round our beautiful baby boy slid into the world at speed! It was my job to announce the sex and as they placed him on mums chest I caught a glimpse of his tiny little winky (and massive ball sack, who knew?)

He is a whopper at 10 pound 7 ounces and the most beautiful thing I have ever seen. He was the largest and latest baby our midwife had ever delivered (already breaking records)

I have learnt a level of respect for all mothers that I couldn't have dreamed possible, not least my stunningly beautiful, stubborn, super hero of a wife! I have to say next time I think I am running out of steam I will try to channel just 1 % of what got her through 15 gruelling hours with no food and barely any water or sleep, I am forever in her debt and I will make sure our darling son William knows that too. Thanks also go to all the midwives who attended especially Liz, Rosie and Teresa. Terri at Cornwall hypnobirthing and to mine and my wife's parents for bringing us up to use our own minds, form our own opinions and make our own informed decisions. It's not easy to go against guidance when it at least appears to put you more at risk but my message to care providers that hate people like me and my wife, is, just because we don't agree, that does not mean we don't care for the well-being of our unborn child, stats (of which there are few on this topic) are there to be interpreted and the picture is much bigger than labour itself. I hope that the decisions we made not only put our son at the least possible risk but also gave him the best possible start in life coming into the world un-drugged and with immediate skin to skin contact with mum and dad. My suspicion is that if more kids were brought into the world this way, there would be less suicide and less violence, remember, deaths do not only happen in the delivery suite. All that said I would be lying if I didn't say that when the sh%# hit the fan all of those decisions we had made flashed before my eyes with a deep sense of regret, perhaps we got lucky, perhaps we played the odds, we will never know but all I can advise is GO WITH YOUR GUT.