



A Mother's Instinct

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By Deborah Maw

My first baby was born in Eire, although we were living in Dumfries and Galloway at the time, 20 miles from Dumfries - the nearest hospital.

I had my heart set on a homebirth; it was one of those 'knowings' that mothers get. I knew I must not be in hospital but, at about 7 months into my pregnancy, I was living alone in an isolated caravan, with no car or phone (way before the mobile-phone era), and the midwives who came to visit said, 'No'.

They persuaded me to visit the hospital where I was taken to meet a consultant in what looked to me like a boardroom. He completely ridiculed my birth plan - because I wanted to be outside - and then barricaded the door when I tried to leave in floods of tears. I went straight to a phone box and called my friend in Eire who told me to come to her.

Everything then happened at once. I was given a council house but this was still 20 miles away from the hospital and I still had no phone. I moved in, bought a car and an old flat bed pram, persuaded a friend to accompany me and at 8 months pregnant I drove down to West Cork.

It was so beautiful. Late June, the weather was hot, the garden lush, and I settled into the last weeks of pregnancy with friends and babies all around.

The weeks passed. I was about two weeks overdue when I started with medium but regular

contractions - for two days. They really kicked in on the third evening, but other than being exhausted nothing had changed by the following morning. I was hanging - literally from anything that would support me - in the garden as it was a beautiful day again. I went into the second stage mid morning. Our midwife friend came over. The hospital was over two hours away in Cork and we didn't have a phone.

My waters broke - full of meconium - however it was obviously old and my baby's heartbeat was good. The midwife was using a cardboard tube pinard (stethoscope) that worked perfectly well. But nothing was happening except that I was getting more and more 'out of it', being walked around the garden and using tree trunks to pull against as I pushed.

Three hours of second stage later, just after midday, my daughter was born, beneath a tree. After a bit of suctioning she was absolutely fine despite a very temporarily misshapen skull. 7lb. I already had her name since the caravan days - Geminy, with Bridget as a second name to honour my friend and the country of her birth.

We had to go to Skibbereen to register her birth. The registrant was completely discombobulated - and when we saw the register we realised why. My daughter was the first baby born in West Cork for over 20 years as everyone now went to hospital in Cork City. We returned to the UK a month later.

Geminy, now 34, is so grateful to have dual citizenship with a British and an EU passport. Because of the latter, she has just been accepted for a Canadian working visa. For Brits without an EU passport, it's a random lottery.

I may have been running a risk, however, had I remained in 'the system' it is highly unlikely I would have been allowed to go two weeks overdue, or to be in first stage for three days, or second stage for three hours, especially after my baby had obviously been in distress at some point. As a primigravida mother (old at 31) I would have had medical intervention at some point - possibly resulting in a C-section. As it was, I hadn't even torn. This meant I was able to go on and have two more home births - both with three hour second stages - and both with much bigger babies.

I highly recommend Ina May Gaskin's book 'Spiritual Midwifery' for all mothers who want to trust their instinct and need to be fully informed.

For Geminy's 30th birthday we returned to West Cork for a cycling tour holiday of the Beara Peninsula, visiting Bridget, Ballydehob (the village of Geminy's birth), the house and the tree under which she was born.



Author Bio: Deborah believes that everyone is free to make their own decisions, to follow their inner guidance. She began her education in science; however, after gaining a PGCE and PhD in Biochemistry, she changed track, travelling for 4 years before starting a family and re-training as a complementary therapist and artist. Deborah now works with people who want more freedom in their lives, freedom to follow their dreams.