



## Book Reviews

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#### [That Bath's Got No Taps](#) by The Millinson Family

Reviewed by Suzanna Nock

After lamenting in a previous issue of the AIMS Journal that there did not seem to be any books for children about water birth, I received a lovely book in the post from the Millinson family. The book was written by them when expecting their third child, and the illustrations were drawn by the two older children.

The title is the comment made by their son when he first saw the birth pool.

The book is in an A4 format, spiral-bound, and contains a mix of colour photographs, text and black-and-white drawings. The text is simple but informative, and offers a useful starting point for children ages three to seven years.

The 'story' starts by explaining that Mummy has a baby in her tummy and that "the uterus is like a stretchy bag which holds the baby tight like a cuddle". The text goes on to explore the relationships between the 'Hump' and the children, and also describes how mother is changing.

"Mummy is having our baby at home", and the role of the midwife is beautifully described as "The midwife stays with us and helps Mummy and the baby". This is accompanied by a delightful photograph of a smiling midwife interacting with the children while the mother leans on the side of the pool.

The big pool of water was clearly a big hit with the children as "we all got in" which, from the picture, included Dad as well.

"Later, the water helped the baby to come out". I think this reflects the experience of many families (rather than couples) who use water pools, for whom the pool is a great source of fascination. Our son was certainly very keen to get in it both on trial runs and on the day, and being able to do this makes them

feel special, and more of a part of the birth and arrival of the new baby.

The story concludes with the start of breastfeeding and the news that "when our baby was born, we were all very happy."

Although it is not published professionally, this is a thoughtfully written book, with informative pictures and photographs. I think that any family having a water birth, particularly at home, would be very pleased to have this book to share.

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### **The Good Mother by Sian Busby**

Short Books, 2004

Reviewed by Jean Robinson

"I have been thinking about Beth and what she did for most of my life. Over the years I have been afraid, if not of her exactly, then of the power of her deed."

In 1919, Beth Wood took her 10-day-old twins down to the yard in the night and drowned them in a tin bath. She had no memory of what she had done. She was found guilty of murder but, as it was obvious to everyone that she was not in her right mind, she was sent to Broadmoor.

Indeed, she had been far from well when the pregnancy started; she had been in a state of profound grief since her four-year-old daughter had died from diphtheria; she could not stop crying and had become painfully thin.

The family pleaded for her to come home from Broadmoor, insisting that she was a good mother to her other children, and she was discharged two years later.

The author of this book was 10 years old when she learned what her great-grandmother had done - and in strange circumstances. Her own mother was about to give birth, and her granny warned her to keep an eye on her "because mothers can sometimes do funny things after they have a baby".

Although it forms only a short part of this superbly written book, it is the account of two births - Beth's twins and the author's first child - which fascinated me. The twins had, in fact, been triplets, but the third was lost because the domiciliary midwife (highly experienced, with a good reputation) used ergot to clamp down the uterus after the birth of the second. With the birth of the third, Beth had an extensive tear and massive haemorrhage, and had to go into hospital for a transfusion. She walked only with difficulty at the inquest.

The author, Sian Busby, had a transverse lie for her first baby, and was shocked to learn she needed a

caesarean. She, too, had a nearly fatal postpartum haemorrhage, and left hospital "a bloodless" wreck. The nightmares and flashbacks of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) followed. She had constant dreams in which mothers stood around watching their babies drown. Then, when awake, she thought, "What if I were to put a pillow over my baby's face?" She links this experience to the family tragedy. But I have heard many similar stories from mothers after traumatic births: dreams of something terrible happening to the baby, and flashes of thoughts in which they might do harm to the baby.

Sian told no one about these dreadful dreams - like most mothers. Which was just as well, since a mother of my acquaintance who did report such dreams to a health visitor was immediately reported to Social Services as being a risk to her baby. So, it did her no good at all. In fact, these flashes of such imagined behaviour are, I suspect, common, but because mothers dare not talk about them, the health visitor who only hears the odd one has no idea that this alone does not represent a true risk; it may simply mean that the mum needs reassurance and support.