



Saffi Simran Kaur Nijhar Raj
 Daughter of Inderjeet and Chandeeep Raj
 Born on the 11th October 2010, at home in Hartley Wintney,
 Weighing 7lb 5oz



Welcome to the World

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Proud parents share their birth experiences with us and Baby Hampshire welcomes three new arrivals into the world

Hampshire mum, Chandeeep Raj, had not planned to have a home birth – so it came as something of a shock when she found herself giving birth to her daughter Saffi, in the family bathroom. Chandeeep's first child, Ruben, had been two weeks late and had needed to be induced, and Chandeeep was expecting a similar experience second time round. She finished work a week before her due date, anticipating at least a couple of weeks to relax at home and finish the preparations for Saffi's arrival.

Never mind two weeks, she barely made it through the first weekend. On Sunday 10th October Chandeeep
"I felt that something was happening and called to Inderjeet. He took one look and said 'oh my God, I think that's the head!'"
 went to bed, having been tired all day. In the early hours of Monday morning she woke up feeling uncomfortable. At

5.30am her husband Inderjeet, who is a GP, got up to go to work. Still feeling uncomfortable, Chandeeep got up too and started walking around the house. "I didn't want Inderjeet to go to work. He was supposed to be doing a morning surgery, but eventually he managed to rearrange it so that he could stay at home." Although she now felt that her baby was definitely on the way, Chandeeep didn't think that there was any rush. "We got Ruben up and Inderjeet took him to school. I had a show, so I called the midwife who said that I sounded as though I had everything under control. I'm a very calm person, and I thought I had ages to go." ▶

Chandeep was still experiencing discomfort, but she wasn't sure whether she was actually having contractions. "I had nothing to compare it to – the previous time I'd been induced and it was totally artificial. This time I thought the pain was going to get much worse – I think I must have a very high pain threshold!"

At 10am, and still not sure whether she was in labour or not, Chandeep popped to the loo. "I felt that something was happening and called to Inderjeet. He took one look and said 'oh my God, I think that's the head!'"

Although Inderjeet is a doctor and had delivered babies before, he started to panic. "His mind went blank," says Chandeep, "he couldn't remember where we kept the towels, let alone delivering babies during his medical training!"

It was clear that they weren't going to have time to get to the hospital. Inderjeet called for an ambulance while Chandeep braced herself against the bathroom sink.

The ambulance had problems finding the family's house, because it's a new build and the postcode didn't come up on the ambulance sat nav. In the end, Chandeep couldn't wait. "I heard a squeak, and I was worried because we have a marble floor! In the end, I pretty much gave birth while Inderjeet was on the phone to the paramedics."

Saffi was born at 11am, and at 11.15 the paramedics took Chandeep and Saffi into hospital. Ever calm in a crisis, Chandeep called in to work at 12.30 because she'd been due to have a catch up with a colleague who was just back from honeymoon. "They were very surprised to hear that I'd already had my baby!"

Chandeep was anaemic, and was kept in hospital overnight while her blood count was monitored, but the following day she and Saffi were allowed to go home. "It was funny when we got back, because we were saying to her 'this is where you live' – but, of course, she'd already seen it."

After such a dramatic birth, everyday life continues to be good fun in the Raj household. "There's never a dull minute! Ruben is a very good big brother, and Saffi adores him - her face lights up whenever she sees him."



Fareham couple, Dan and Sarah, met through dancing – at a jive class where Dan was coaching. A year later they moved in together and in 2007 they got married. "After having been married for a couple of years we decided to start a family." Says Sarah. "We both felt it was what we wanted, and were ready for. We were pleased when I found out I was pregnant, and

pleasantly surprised, because it happened so soon after we'd started trying for a baby."

Sarah sailed through her pregnancy with no complications, aside from the usual morning sickness. "I think that whoever coined the term 'morning sickness' must have been a man, though, because I had it all day! It lasted for the first couple of months, and after that I was fine – apart from heartburn and

feeling like a life-sized weeble!"

Dan and Sarah decided not to find out the sex of their baby. "We wanted to retain the element of surprise – though everybody we knew was convinced I was going to have a boy."

Everyone also told Sarah that first babies are always late – something she disproved by going into labour a week early. "I sat through my last antenatal class attached to a tens machine. My contractions had started the night before, but I hadn't been sure whether

"Dan was visibly distressed and worried at what was happening, but the midwives did what they could to reassure him."

they were practice ones or not, and didn't want to start an unnecessary panic. I hadn't had any kind of show and my waters hadn't broken, so I wasn't sure what was actually happening. As it was, the midwife at the antenatal class said that practice ones shouldn't hurt as much as mine were, examined me, and suggested getting to the hospital. She was right!"

"The birth didn't go without a few complications, but having the support of Dan and all the midwives certainly helped." Sarah progressed from gas and air to an epidural, when, after 12 hours, the pain became too much. However, things started to get really tricky when Tess moved into a spine-to-spine position. "Despite being fully dilated, any attempts at pushing proved fruitless. I couldn't believe it when I was told they needed to take me into theatre, but I was keen for the ordeal to be brought to an end so was happy for the doctors to do whatever was best for me and the baby."

"Dan was visibly distressed and worried at what was happening, but the midwives did what they could to reassure him. We soon discovered there was no hope of ventouse or forceps working either, because Tess had tilted her head backwards, and I was told I would have to have a caesarean."

"The surgeon whipped her out of me in about five minutes – she was apparently fine throughout everything, and

experienced no distress, which was very good to hear."

Dan and Sarah were told that they had a baby daughter and Dan was able to cut the cord. "It was the only thing on my birthing plan the went as it should have! Dan then brought Tess over to me because I wasn't able to hold her, and I looked over at her while I was being sewn up. I felt so happy and relieved that she was okay, after everything we'd gone through. Dan was smiling and we even agreed to a photo in our scrubs!"

The proud parents were delighted to get their new baby home. "We felt like a proper little family – we were where we wanted to be, and we felt so happy." Though, despite this, Sarah still found the first weeks of motherhood hard

going. "I struggled emotionally at first, frequently worrying and bursting into tears, and just feeling very down in general. I put it all down to my hormones and chronic lack of energy. We were finally finding out all the things that the books and the classes can't prepare you for, and everything was upside-down for a while, but we had lots of help from family, for which we were extremely thankful. Being a new parent is so hard, but so rewarding in the end."

"Now we're happier than ever. I've recovered enough from the c-section to be able to do everything I did before. Dan has come into his own as a dad and absolutely loves it. Tess is a beautiful and extremely contented baby, and we would do it all again tomorrow." ▶





Katherine and Dave were teenage sweethearts, introduced by their mothers when they were just 15 and 17. "He didn't exactly sweep me off my feet," laughs Katherine, "on our second date he challenged me to a game of ping pong and showed me photos of himself as a baby, but what can I say? The rest is history!"

Eight years later the couple were married, and, after one last big trip to Australia, they decided to start a family. "It was January 2010 and Portsmouth was covered in snow," Remembers Katherine. "I was feeling

strangely tired, but thought it might be from trekking to work through the snow. I went up to bed and then thought 'I wonder... I did a cheap pregnancy test, but the line was broken and blurry so I couldn't be sure what the result was. By then it was midnight, but we were so excited we jumped in the car and drove at 10mph through the snow to the 24 hour Tesco to buy another test. There were no other cars on the road, but it took ages to get home and it felt like forever waiting for the result. We were over the moon when it was positive."

The couple's friends and family were excited too, including their young

nephews Toby and Joshua – who decided that the baby was going to be called Indiana Jones.

Katherine had a healthy pregnancy, and both she and Dave felt that the time went quickly. "At first I felt that nine months was a long time to wait," says Dave, "but it flew by." The only hitch was at six months, when Katherine found a rash on her back and the doctor suspected measles. "I wasn't immune, after missing the MMR jab at school, and measles can cause miscarriage, low birth weight and birth defects. We waited over a week to get the test results back, and we were terrified. The internet is great

for information during pregnancy but it can be terrifying reading all the horror stories! I was scared to call and get my results, but very relieved to be told it wasn't measles."

Two weeks before her due date, Katherine went into labour. "After the first three hours of contractions I said 'Wow, I'm really surprised. I'm finding labour much easier than I imagined.' How naive I was!"

In total, Katherine's labour lasted 37 hours. She'd been hoping for a natural water birth, but discovered that she had Strep B, which meant that a birthing pool was not an option. In the end, with Benjamin in a tricky back-to-back position, she decided to go for an epidural. "If I could give any advice to expectant mothers it would be not to get too worked up about a birth plan, and not to be upset if things don't go the way you imagined. The most important thing is to do what's best for you and your baby at the time, and to deliver the baby as safely as possible."

At 6.22 on the 29th of August, Benjamin was born. "I'll never forget the look on Dave's face – so pleased and proud to have a baby and be a daddy. I wanted Dave to be the one to tell me the sex of the baby, but he was so overwhelmed that he was speechless. The midwives and I kept saying 'Dave – boy or girl?' After about 30 seconds he snapped out of it and grinned 'a boy!'"

It was the following evening before Katherine and Dave decided on a name for their new baby boy. "It sounds crazy, but we just didn't have chance to talk about it. It was pretty busy that first day - baby checks, checking me, visitors, the hospital photographer, the doctor, and we just didn't get round to it."

Unfortunately for Joshua they decided, in the end, not to go for Indiana Jones. "My sister explained to him that we didn't think the baby looked like an Indiana Jones and we wanted other suggestions. One of the names he came up with was Ben 10, so he was quite happy when we decided on Benjamin."

Back home, Benjamin suffered from colic, and was diagnosed with a milk intolerance. He was prescribed lactose free milk, and at three months his colic disappeared. It had been a tough time for Katherine, though. "I felt like



Benjamin Paul Hughes

Son of Katherine and Dave Hughes
Born on the 29th August 2010, at the Queen Alexandra
Hospital, Portsmouth, weighing 6lb 3oz

the colic was never going to end, and I was exhausted. In hindsight, I think I tried to do too much. My advice to new mums would be: don't try and be a superwoman. It really doesn't matter if your kitchen is a mess, the ironing pile is huge or your husband yet again has to have takeaway for tea!"

Fortunately Katherine's mum was on hand to help out in those difficult first few weeks. "She's been amazing. I wasn't very mobile in the beginning, and because of stitches and an infection I couldn't even sit properly for the first two weeks. Every movement was painful and walking was difficult too. Mum would come round first thing in the morning and stay until Dave came home from work. Having someone there to help with the everyday things, like making drinks for visitors, organising dinner and washing up meant that I could just focus on Benjamin without worrying about everything else. I don't know what I would have done without Mum."

Katherine is also full of praise for husband Dave, who, despite working long shifts as a police officer, still finds plenty time for his family. "Dave's a brilliant dad, he's a real natural. He always comes home with a smile on

his face, ready to play with Benjamin. When Benjamin had colic, he was forever researching on the net and even using the netmums website to source new ideas."

"Benjamin is such a happy baby now and he smiles and laughs all the time. He's more than I could've ever hoped for. I don't know what I've done to deserve such a wonderful husband and son – life is truly perfect!" 🌸



FEATURE YOUR STORY:

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