



Catching Babies: A Midwife's Tale

Sheena Byrom

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The inspirational story of life as a midwife.

From her very first day as a nervous student nurse in Blackburn to the dedicated completion of her nursing qualifications and her training as a midwife in Burnley, Sheena Byrom has never once looked back, enjoying a thirty-five-year career with the NHS.

Catching Babies is a moving account of an extraordinary career. It reveals the unique experiences that filled Sheena's days as she looked after overwhelmed mums and dads and helped to bring their precious babies into the world.

At the forefront of evolving medical practices, she was the first midwife to oversee a home water birth in her area, but also found herself at the centre of a traumatic delivery that resulted in a nine-year litigation case and tested her to her limits.

Yet, whatever has come Sheena's way, ultimately, there are the strong mothers who taught her so much and the little miracles who have made every single moment as a midwife truly magical.

Catching Babies: A Midwife's Tale Details

Date : Published November 24th 2011 by Headline (first published November 1st 2011)

ISBN : 9780755362721

Author : Sheena Byrom

Format : Paperback 320 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Nurses, Nursing, Autobiography, Memoir, Biography

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From Reader Review Catching Babies: A Midwife's Tale for online ebook

Lucinda says

This inspirational, heartwarming and candid true story of a midwife will melt your heart!

This has to be one of the most heartwarming, touching and beautiful real-life stories about a woman working in the medical profession (in particular midwifery), I have ever read. It is candid, frank and utterly honest as Sheena Byrom speaks to you from the heart as she reminisces about her remarkable and wonderful career. Anyone who dreams of working within this select specialist area of practice just has to read this book, as it presents to you an insight that no other training manual can give; looking through the eyes of a midwife. From her very first day as a student nurse in Blackburn to the completion of her training and nursing qualifications, to then go on and train as a midwife in Burnley; Sheena Byrom has never looked back. Spending thirty-five years under the employment of the NHS (National Health Service), there is not much that Sheena doesn't know about what it is like to be an employee of them. This moving and poignant account looks at one woman's extraordinary career as it reveals her unique experiences, on the ward as she helps to bring new life into the world. At the forefront of evolving midwifery practices one gets to see just how things have advanced and changed over the years, being that she also was the first midwife to oversee a home water birth in her area. Amid the ups and downs Sheena was also at the centre of a traumatic delivery case that resulted in a nine-year litigation and which really did test her to her limits, as a healthcare professional is always responsible and accountable for everything that they do (or are alleged to do). Whatever has come Sheena's way over the years she has dealt with, with a strong character and moral fibre that is commendable. There are many strong mothers who have taught her so much, and the little miracles that have made every single moment as a midwife truly magical.

If you are a fan of Jennifer Worth's 'Call the Midwife' (book and television drama series), then you will love this magnificent memoir that is just as delightful. The labors that take hours and hours, the complicated ones that do not always go as planned, breech babies, cesarean sections and family complications are all daily things that Sheena experienced. For any mother childbirth has its risks and complications, and the author goes into detail about various cases that sadly have not always been as straightforward as one would hope for and which in turn has tested her skills as a nurse. She proves that even with extensive training nothing can prepare you for when you qualify and those pregnant mothers that you will be caring for, as it is a challenging and often unpredictable career. It is however extremely rewarding and I very much loved the accounts of when a new baby had been born into the world perfectly healthy, which I can only imagine it to be one of the most overwhelming and indescribable moments that is beyond words.

This captivating and compelling memoir is a great tribute to midwifery and the nursing profession, which gives the reader an in-depth look at what life is like for a midwife. It is truly magical and a real stirring narrative, that is just a joy and delight to behold.

Sharon says

I read this book on holiday, so had plenty of time to devote to it. I'd really been looking forward to it, but was disappointed overall. Unfortunately there was at least one glaring error. She said she was 24 (I think, left the book on holiday) when she had her first child. Then a few chapters later she was having her second child and is the same age or a year younger than when she had the first child! Think the editors should have spotted

that!

She didn't seem to have any difficulty in progressing through her career and towards the end it got a bit boring. A bit more about the experiences of delivering babies and the families she came into contact with would have made this book much more enjoyable.

Felicity says

As a trainee midwife it is important for me to understand what has come before... Reading about Sheena's commitment to maternity services and her innovative ideas that have helped shape current practice (i.e. teenage pregnancy specialist midwife, Sure Start, consultant midwifery, etc.) is very inspiring. Sheena's is a career I should like to emulate. But what stands out most of all is her strong philosophy of care - women-centredness at all times. Compassion, kindness and the ability to really listen to women are the foundations of basic midwifery practice.

Amanda says

Informative look at the development of midwifery over the decades through the eyes of an experienced health care expert. A little dry in places but certainly an overall enjoyable read.

Nicola Clough says

Amazing story of a midwife and her time starting as a student right up to retirement an excellent read and it's amazing to hear how times have changed. Some frightening stories that Sheena went through while a midwife and how she changed throughout her career a must read and hard to put the book down as such an easy and inspirational story.

Kelly Littlewood says

A wonderful story about the tales of a midwife throughout the changes in the profession and a woman coping with a family and a career. As a true story, I was expecting it to not be so interesting however there were so many events during the span of her career that it was a very interesting read. It allows people who are not in the field of nursing and midwifery to get an insight whilst allowing those entering the profession to see what came before them. There couldn't be a more accurate tale of midwifery through the years than from someone so highly acclaimed in it.

Andrea Miles says

interesting book following Sheena's career - however it is let down by its essayish (sorry if I made this word

up) style . reminds me a bit od what I did on my holidays essays as a child. It also gives an insight into the way the medical profession delas with labour & how things change

Angela Hamilton says

I absolutely loved this book and couldn't put it down. I 100% recommend it

Yara says

After finally grabbing some me time, I finished it! Such a wonderful account of her journey through nursing then midwifery. It takes a couple chapters to get to the midwifery part though apart from that, fantastic and inspiring of life as a midwife.

Smitha says

Catching Babies: The true story of a dedicated midwife is exactly what it says on the cover. Sheena Byrom's story from the day she signed up to be a nurse, to the dedicated midwife she retired as.

From a close-knit family of five sisters, Sheena had a very loving childhood. Sheena had to give up her studies after her A levels, when both her parents fell ill. Her parents needed her support financially and emotionally. While she was disappointed about leaving her studies, she understood that it was the need of the hour. Later her mother encouraged her to think about nursing as a profession. The idea of a job in a caring profession really appealed to her. About to turn eighteen, she went in for her nursing interview and got selected, much to her great joy.

She started off as a nurse, but soon got attracted to midwifery after getting a chance to be at a birth. She recalls how she could still remember the thrill and pleasure that she felt while assisting with the birth. It was the first in many, many more to come.

After qualifying as a nurse, she decided to apply to be a pupil midwife, as that seemed to be what fascinated her the most. Then on, it's about her journey as a midwife. As she says, 'I was to learn that the job satisfaction in midwifery came from doing less to individuals and doing more with them'.

The narrative of her life as a midwife also charts the way the profession has changed over the decades and how so many dedicated midwives have helped change the childbirth experience to what it is today in Britain. From the days where a pregnant woman was treated as a 'patient' to the time when it is an experience of a lifetime for a woman, and the understanding that she needs to be the one to make the decisions for herself and her baby.

Along with her narrative about her professional life, we get to see Sheena's personal life, getting married to her boyfriend Paul, losing her father, her sister, giving birth to her babies, looking after her mother. The close bond between her and her family, the friends she makes along the way, the difficulties and trials they face as a family. It is a wonderful, positive read.

Her passion for her vocation shines through. Her joy knows no bounds when her oldest daughter decides to

become a midwife too. All was not rosy for her though. She found herself in the middle of a litigation case, where she knew that she had done nothing wrong, and yet, she gets defamed, and she and her family had a hard time while the case was ongoing. Despite her trials, she continues to be positive and even understand the family which decided to litigate. She understood their limitations and only wished she could do more to help them.

As she recounts the stories, her passion and respect for a mother giving birth to a baby comes across so strongly, and also how having a dedicated midwife support you through a pregnancy can make a real difference to a woman's experience of giving birth. She talks of dedicated midwives, nurses and consultants who put the women first, who listened to the pregnant women, and made all the difference. Sheena herself has worked in different areas, in close knit maternity units, as a community midwife, communicating, supporting women in all sorts of situations, some living in extreme poverty, farmers wives who are on their feet the very next day, women from immigrant families, teenage mothers. The basic need for all pregnant women is after all the same. One of the stories she recounts of a lady who had been so let down by the system, that she was extremely hostile to all the midwives, until she was listened to. All she wanted was for someone to actually listen to her worries and fears.

The book gives a great insight into the lives of midwives in this country. The first time I encountered midwives was when I was pregnant with daughter. In India, I think the concept of a midwife is almost non-existent, atleast in urban cities. In the NHS, if the pregnancy is low risk and normal, the midwives are the ones who provide the care throughout the pregnancy. Reading this book, gave me a real perspective to life on the other side.

It was a beautiful, warm read, which gives one a true insight into the lives of midwives, their struggles, triumphs and struggles. An absolutely recommended read. It is a hard-to-put-down book.

Rebecca Shipton says

A fascinating slice of midwifery history from a well respected midwife. More interesting for me as a healthcare professional, I particularly enjoyed reading about the changes and innovations the author had contributed to. However, the writing was a little dry in places and I feel fellow nurses and midwives may enjoy this book more than lay people.

Maria Argent says

Excellent at the beginning and then got very slow and uninteresting towards the end

Laura says

A delightful memoir documenting the authors journey from novice student midwife to the highly skilled, experienced senior midwife that she is today. After the popularity of midwifery TV dramas and documentaries, dozens of books of this genre popped up overnight. This is one of the more interesting reads of its kind.

In agreement with some other reviewers, the writing style did feel a bit formal at times - almost as if the author was writing a statement with the intention of being promoted. However, this is brought back down to earth with beautiful stories from the delivery room and the impact pregnancy and birth has on family networks. Of course, there are a few sad stories documented; the author would not be doing herself any favours if she had not included this side of midwifery.

I adore the title of this book, and its accompanying cover design. It is what attracted me to it in the first place. I am not one hundred percent certain I would read a follow up to this book, if one were to be published, however I would recommend this memoir for anyone interested in 'the good old days' of midwifery practice, or simply those working in the field today who want a glimpse of their careers roots.

Anna says

This was really insightful and interesting and overall a good read. However I found that it got less interesting towards the end as she became a consultant and had very little contact with the babies and mothers....which is what I read it for!!

Annie says

This book was indeed OK. It was interesting to learn about 'how things were done' in this era & the changes that the author saw & helped promote. However, I would have actually like to know MORE about this, rather than her continual feelings of inadequacy but getting the next job anyway. More about the babies & mothers & the processes & special stories about births with a little less about the author herself would have made the book more interesting to me personally.
