

Harris was born at 00:31 on Wednesday 29th June 2022 at Aberdeen Maternity Hospital after 41 weeks and 4 days of pregnancy. The eagerly anticipated arrival of our first child. Labour had started the previous day, and we went in to be checked that everything was progressing, as it should. Harris' heart rate was dipping slightly with each contraction, before it dropped significantly, and he was born via emergency C-Section under general anaesthetic. Despite the best efforts of all of the medical staff, Harris did not survive, and our journey in to parenthood began in the worst way imaginable.



Harris was beautiful; he had lots of red hair, and was very long - something which he didn't get from either of us! We spent time with Harris in hospital, telling him how sorry we were, and that a lifetime of love was already his. We were able to make imprints of his hands and feet, ink prints, and a volunteer photographer came from Remember My Baby to take the only photos we'll ever have of our perfect boy. Initially, this was something that I did not want, but I'm so glad that the midwife came back and asked again – I'm sure she knew I'd change my mind. I cannot fault the care we received in the Rubislaw Ward – everyone we interacted with treated us with kindness, patience, and respect.

Leaving the hospital with a memory box and no baby is something that no parent should ever have to do. Having to leave Harris behind with the midwife is one of the hardest things I think I'll ever have to do. She promised to look after him, but it felt so fundamentally wrong to leave him there, when I should have been looking after him. We visited Harris at the funeral directors, we read to him, and spent as much time with him as we could before he was cremated.

How we got through the days and weeks that followed Harris' birth I will never know. People comment on how strong you must be, but you don't have any other choice. We found counselling through Teddy's Wish, and attended the local SANDs group – it was through a community of bereaved parents that we found the help we needed. I read lots, I found stories online and books about baby loss – I was desperate to know that I would survive, and that it wouldn't always feel like I had fallen into rough seas where I couldn't catch my breath before another wave threatened to drown me.

Four months after Harris was born, we returned to the hospital for the debrief into their findings. While we were given some answers – Harris had outgrown the placenta, and an infection had started during labour. They thought that a combination of these factors meant that he could not survive labour. We have to learn to live with not knowing if, given a different set of circumstances, would Harris be with us now.



We remember Harris every day - we use his name, we leave decorated pebbles for him in the places that we visit, we write his name in the sand, and since reading 'Harris the Hero' about a puffin named Harris, we have puffins all around the house. The best thing that others can do for us is to do these things too. Harris will always be our first-born son, and we want him to be acknowledged. We love him, and we miss him and everything he should have been, always,

Finally, if you're reading this after losing your baby I am so very sorry. I hope that this can somehow make you feel less alone, and that you can find the support you need. Time doesn't heal all wounds, but it means you can learn to live alongside it. Grief and joy can coexist, and even though some days feel so bleak and it feels like you can't breathe, eventually, you'll manage to let life back in.