**Jean - Community Midwife - the challenges of communication!**

‘We had no mobile phones when I was working. So when we saw people before they had their babies we asked them to save pennies for the phone box’

Jean remembers one call out when access to a telephone became a real issue. She was attending a birth at the old Aldwarke Railway Station – converted into a house, but still with the old platform alongside. The house was some considerable distance from any other houses, and there was no phone box anywhere nearby.

During the birth, it became apparent that additional help would be needed, and that Jean would need to call for assistance, however this left her with a dilemma. Also present was the lady’s sister, but she was looking after a number of children from both families. The nearest phone box was at the Greasebro Road and Broad Street crossroads.

So did Jean send out the sister, and care for all 4 children, as well as the labouring mum; or should she leave everyone to make the call herself?

Though it was a difficult choice, Jean made the decision to seek help, and left the house. It was extremely foggy; the thick fog, exacerbated by all the local industry of the time. Through the murk, Jean saw one strange light moving towards her at head height. A disembodied voice came through the fog ‘*are you alreit, love?’.*

The voice belonged to a local miner who was able to take Jean across the railway lines and the yards beyond to an ambulance room where she was able to make the vital phone call – and all turned out well!

There were a number of ways to work round these communication difficulties. Once the nurses had left on their rounds, the only way of getting hold of them would be to follow their route- so they had to leave a list of their calls, just in case. Patients were asked to call in between 8.30 and 9 am if they thought they might need to see the midwife that day. However, this didn’t always work to plan

One year, the week before Christmas Jean got a call that at 8.30 that one of here mums might be starting in labour, so she agreed to make this her first call, only to find the baby already delivered by the time she arrived! However, this meant that one member of the family had several beliefs shattered in one week.

When Jean called for the 3-day visit, she was accosted by one of the other children in the family, a little boy.

*“I know you didn’t bring that baby in your bag’* he told Jean ‘*because it was already crying when you got here. And I know that there isn’t a Father Christmas too!’*