

Competing 19th Century Midwifery Instruments; Forceps/Vectis Rivalry and Resolution

Louise Jenkins

About me ...



- Trained as a Midwife in 1996/7
- Completed a MSc in Midwifery in 2001
- Started work as a Midwifery Lecturer in 2005
- Registered teacher with NMC 2008
- Commenced PhD Jan 2009

Midwifery Instruments

- In the 19th Century the term ‘Midwifery’ was applied to instruments and people who assisted with Childbirth.
- Men-midwives became known as Accouchers (from the French - to stand before) and later Obstetricians (from the Latin *obstare* – to stand by)
- Midwife means ‘with woman’

Why instruments?

- Before the use of instruments in Childbirth to deliver LIVE babies, men entered the birthing chamber as a last resort.
- The Chamberlen family were the first to use instruments to deliver LIVE babies.
- Since their introduction the use of instruments has increased, and power and control of childbirth moved away from women.

Methodology so far ...

- Search of Midwifery Treatises 1800 – 1900 held at University of Leeds
- Search of British Medical Journal (online)
- Examination of Collection at Thackray Museum, Leeds – including photographs
- Sample of trade catalogues at Thackray Museum

Work so far ...

How was the vectis used?

Traditional view in secondary sources is that the vectis was placed on the occiput (back of the skull) and drawn downwards along the pelvic curve to assist traction.

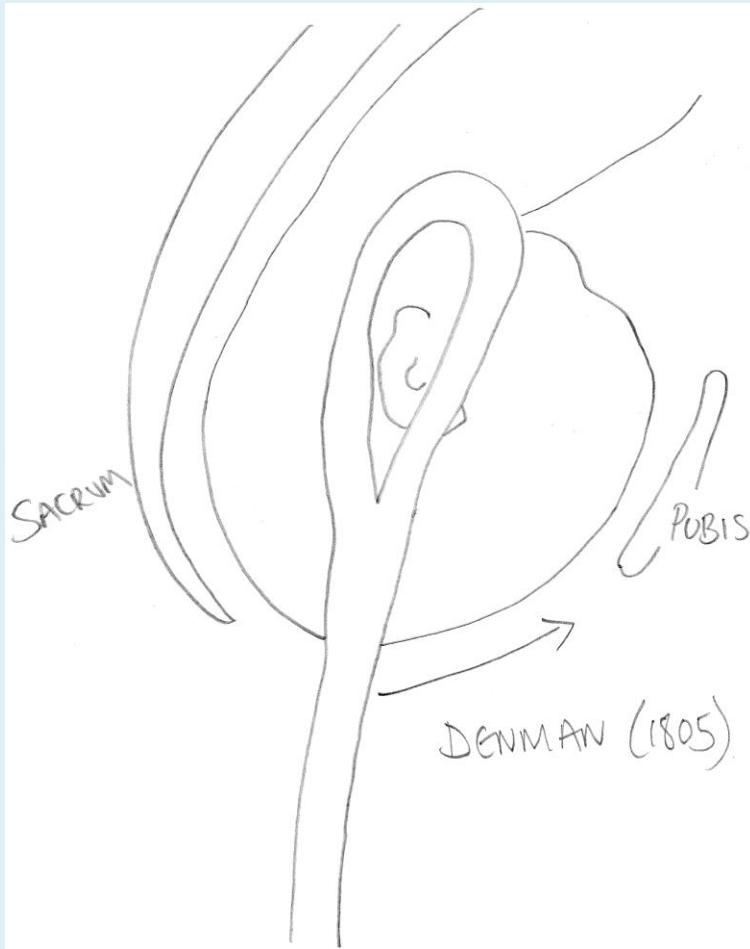


Field (1839)

BUT ...

The original sources differ!

Thomas Denman (1805)



- Influential teacher of Midwifery in London from 1770 until his death in 1815.
- Introduced the vectis over the ear, past the chin.
- Preferred the vectis over the forceps.

Next?

- What contributed to the forceps becoming the successful technology in assisting difficult births?
- What role did midwives play in this change?
- Inventory of extant instruments
- Museum exhibition

Any Questions?

