

'I'M CALLING HIM GABRIEL BECAUSE HE'S MY LITTLE ANGEL'

IN A MOVING INTERVIEW, THE ACTRESS AND PRESENTER TELLS OK!'S CHRISSIE REEVES ABOUT HER PAST MISCARRIAGES AND HOW SHE'S NOW PREGNANT WITH HER FORMER FIANCE'S BABY

Most women are over the moon to find out they're pregnant after years of trying, but when a pregnancy test confirmed Claire Sweeney was six weeks pregnant, the news came with mixed emotions. Just one month before, 43-year-old Claire and her 27-year-old fiancé Daniel Riley split up – and prior to that, she had suffered two devastating miscarriages.

When we meet up with the former *Brookside* star in Liverpool for our exclusive shoot and interview, she looks incredible. Many people might expect Claire to be anxious about the impending arrival but she seems cool, calm and a veritable blossoming delight.

Originally Claire kept her news to herself but told Daniel after her three-month scan when she had come back home from a holiday in Australia. She tells OK!: 'He was thrilled and said it was the best news he'd had in his life. Everyone looks at me and thinks, oh no, they've split up, what a nightmare, but we're fine!' Speaking of the split, Claire says: 'We split up in the second week of January and I found out I was pregnant in the third week of February. I was about to fly off to Australia so it was amazing to have two weeks alone to digest it all.'

Claire has already picked a name for the baby, who is due on October 5, telling us: 'I'm having a boy and I'm calling him Gabriel, because he's my little angel and he's heaven-sent. He'll be gorgeous if he's got Daniel's looks and my personality!'

Here Claire chats to us over a crisp sandwich all about the break-up, crying over Katie Price and how she'd still love to get married... one day.

Hi, Claire how are you feeling?

Fantastic. I love being pregnant – it just feels exactly the right time in my life. I've had such a wonderful career. Some people have children young and others have them later on; I'm lucky enough to be one of them.

Have you had any morning sickness?

No, just headaches. Your second trimester is supposed to be your honeymoon period but I'm knackered. I'm on stage every night and twice on Saturdays [Claire has been starring in *Sex And The Suburbs* at Liverpool's Royal Court Theatre], but I'm in my last week now.

Tell us how you found out...

I'd had a week in rehearsals for my show and I'd felt lousy all week, but I just thought it was because of the pressure and intense working. I didn't know whether to do a test but then I did and it was positive!

What did you do?

I'd booked to go to Australia on my own so when I got there I did another test. I did quite a few tests to confirm it because I've suffered two miscarriages – the first

course. There was no big scandal and other women involved, but then bam, I get pregnant. It was all very amicable, we're still friends and it's great that he wants to be involved with the baby.

How was your three-month scan?

I went with my mum in London then I told Dan afterwards and he was thrilled. I kept it quiet during my first trimester. I wanted to make sure the baby was okay because of the two miscarriages I had before.

And you've found out the sex...

Yes, I'm having a boy and I'm calling him Gabriel because he's my little angel sent from heaven. I thought it was a beautiful name but I might see him and decide on something else. Initially I wanted a girl but I've got my head around it now and as long as he's healthy, I'm happy.

Did you consider reuniting with Daniel after finding out about the baby?

No, because the prime focus was having a healthy, calm pregnancy and I didn't want to add any more drama into the situation.

Might you get back together for the sake of the baby?

Who knows what the future holds? The priority for us at the moment is to get through the pregnancy peacefully.

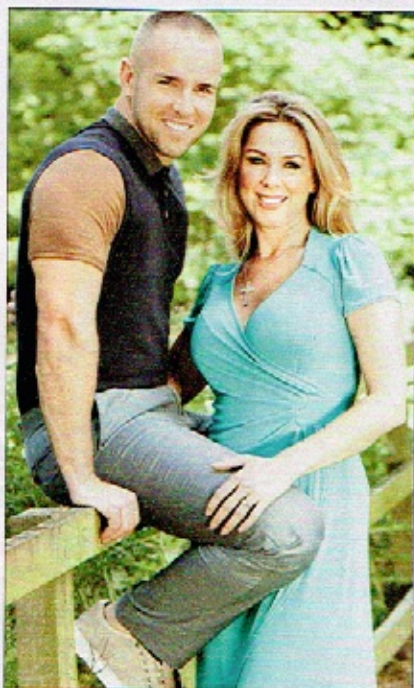
If this one worked out, would you have another baby with Daniel?

I'll probably have this little boy and I'll think, I want some more, why didn't I do this years ago? Or I might think, one's enough, the little bugger!

When were your miscarriages?

The first was two years ago when I was ten weeks pregnant, and my second was last May when I was about four weeks pregnant, but that one hit me harder. I just wrapped myself in cotton wool. I didn't discuss it with anyone – that's the reason I didn't announce this pregnancy until I was five months pregnant; I wanted to keep it private and safe. God works in mysterious ways, and if the baby wasn't right it would've been difficult.

What exactly happened with the miscarriages?



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time I got pregnant I did three tests and a couple of them were conflicting. I did one when I was on holiday in Dubai in May 2012 which just came up with Arabic and noughts and crosses!

How did you feel this time?

Wonderful. I was thrilled to be on the other side of the world on my own to have the time to digest it. I had long walks on the beach asking myself if I'd be okay and I didn't have to tell anyone for two weeks.

You got pregnant just before splitting from Daniel in January – why did you split up?

We were both busy with work and we just grew apart and decided to take time out because we felt it had run its



Above: After splitting from Daniel (facing page) and then finding out she was pregnant

The first one was at ten weeks. I had the D&C [a medical procedure following a miscarriage] on the Sunday. The day before I had a dress rehearsal for *Educating Rita* and it was hard because Rita had to do a speech about wanting a baby, but work got me over it. The second miscarriage lasted a week and hit me hard. I was watching *The Sound Of Music* in Regents Park with Bruno Tonioli and we were having such a laugh. I went to the loo and there it was. I tried to work but I couldn't and cancelled all my TV commitments for the week that it happened.

Did it affect Dan?

Yes, but no one understands until it happens to you. Men can be supportive but only another woman who has gone through that would understand. It was a feeling of loss and grief.

Did you worry you couldn't have children after the miscarriages?

I panicked but tried not to think that, I believe in fate.

Did the miscarriages put pressure on your relationship?

I don't think they did, if anything something like that brings you closer.

Are you scared about facing life as a single mum?

I don't know, it's uncharted territory. It's strange when I'm asked about being a mum because all I've ever had to think about in life is myself and what job I'm doing. I feel blessed.

Did you ever think of staying with Dan because it could be your last chance of having a baby?

No way, it's not fair to do that to someone. I didn't think I needed to stay in my situation because I want a baby, there was no desperation or panic. My friend had a baby at 46 and I live a healthy life – I don't smoke and hardly drink and Dan was teetotal.

What sort of dad will Dan be?

Who knows, he's doing a good job up until now and he's got a lovely family, so hopefully they'll all be a lovely part of his life.

Did you give your engagement ring back when you broke up?

Yes, when we broke up I'd never have kept it.

Will Dan be there when you give birth?

I don't know, we haven't discussed that.

It was reported you're painting a nursery together...

No, it spooks me out doing a nursery before the arrival. Besides I want my baby in my bedroom until he's 26 so I can keep an eye on him!

Where are you having your baby?

At the Liverpool Women's Hospital. I've got my friends in London but they're all either gay or single and I'm sure they'd be supportive but I want my family around me. From September I'll be up here and I'll spend six months up here after the baby, then split myself between London and Liverpool.

Are you having a baby shower?

I'm having two! The one in London for my gay friends will be hysterical. The invites have a baby high-kicking in a sparkly nappy and top hat!

Are you going to have a natural birth?

I'm getting so much grief off people because



The mum-to-be has started work on a nursery yet, and plans to keep the baby in her room until he's 26 so I can

stories about women being in labour for two or three days and then having an emergency C-section. My friend is a midwife and I told her and she did this gasp of horror, but I was like: 'But you don't get a medal for it, love!' Nothing goes wrong in a C-section, it's pain-free – okay so you have to have a recovery period, but that's fine!

Will you have music playing?

I'll have show tunes and Barbra Streisand!

Has it been a smooth pregnancy so far?

Yes, I'm 22 weeks now and about six weeks ago I was in dance rehearsals and suddenly I got these shooting pains and overwhelming urge to lie down. It was torture because I'm such a grafter so I felt guilty, but I knew it was my body telling me to slow down. It happened twice in one day, then I went out for pizza that night and went to the loo and there was blood in my pants.

What did you do?

I panicked and thought I'd been doing too much. The next morning I went to hospital and the first thing I said to the nurse was: 'Please, I just need to hear his heartbeat.' I was like, oh no, not again, I don't know if I can cope with another one after the last two. Anyway, he was fine.

What had happened?

He was fine, but I found out my placenta was in the wrong place: it had dropped and it was blocking the vaginal passage to the womb – if it stays that way you can't have a natural birth. My dancing was causing the placenta to bounce and cause the bleeding. I'm very careful now and after this week I'll be taking it easy.

Did you get scared it was going to be another miscarriage?

So scared, but he's a strong little thing at the moment. ▶

'WE'RE STILL FRIENDS AND IT'S GREAT THAT DAN WANTS TO BE INVOLVED WITH THE BABY'



E: CLAIRE WEARS DRESS, £203, BY ROBERTO CAVALLI; AND SHOES AS BEFORE. BELOW: CLAIRE WEARS DRESS, £219, BY IN THE STYLE

Above and above right: Claire says she was 'so scared' after having a third miscarriage.

Did you have any fertility treatment?

No, it was reported that this was IVF but it wasn't.

Would you have gone down that route or maybe adoption?

I don't know, when we broke up I thought I'd give it a year and then think about a baby. I try not to worry about too much at once. My dad has been very ill, I broke up with Dan; loads happened at once. I had to let nature take its course that a baby would happen, and it did.

How is your dad now?

He's had his leg cut off as he's had lung cancer. He starts radiotherapy soon, it's been horrendous. I said to him: 'Stay strong, this baby is coming through!' My poor mum works so hard and stays strong. So hopefully this baby will bring some joy to the family – my baby is due on my dad's birthday.

Have you had any weird cravings?

No, but I've gone from strong, focused and organised to an emotional wreck. I'll wake up at 5am crying and anxious and I even got upset over the Katie Price story! My friend was teasing me about that, but no woman in that state deserves that. She's at the same stage of pregnancy as me. I tweeted her to say congratulations.

Have you been nesting?

I completely decluttered my London and Liverpool homes. My clothes are colour co-ordinated and I've emptied drawers that haven't been opened in seven years and done ten trips to Oxfam.

Are you going to breastfeed?

I'll try but I've heard how painful it is so I might breastfeed in the day and bottle feed at night.

Will you have a night nurse or maternity nurse?

Yes, I want a baby whisperer to help me get the boy into a routine. Then a nanny who can support me. It will be nice to have someone there to help me, but Dan can do his share too.

Will you have a spare room for Dan to help with the night feeds? Or joint holidays?

I don't know, we'll have to discuss that. I just want to keep things as friendly as possible. Who knows what the future is going to hold. Life has funny twists and turns.

Are you ready to date again?

God no! My baby is my priority. I don't want another man. Even when we split up I wasn't interested, even before I found out I was pregnant.

Do you think you'll ever get married?

I'd like to in the future, when the time is right. I loved being engaged and wedding planning.


How much weight have you put on with this pregnancy?

A stone and a half, but I'm not bothered. I love eating what I want. I'm enjoying food. I'd normally be on a diet the week before an OK! shoot but now I can relax without Spanx or sucking everything in! **OK!**

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It seems the pregnant hormones have left Claire