

Alison Mitchell, 36, lives in a former police house in East Yorkshire with fiancé David, also 36, a finance executive, and her daughters Jessica, nine, and eight-month-old Emma. Alison was abandoned in February 1967 when she was just a few hours old

I buried my face in my hands and began crying so hard I could barely breathe. Yes, he's your brother, the consultant said, a warm smile spreading across his face. They were the words I'd been praying to hear, but never dared hope I would.

My brother. My real brother. Born just 18-months part, sophisticated DNA tests had proved that we shared the same mother - and she had abandoned us both as new-born babies.

As Iain turned towards me and buried his face in my shoulder, we hugged for the very first time. Like me, he wept uncontrollably, completely overwhelmed by this extraordinary news.

During the weeks since we'd first met, we'd avoided any physical contact. It felt as if we'd be tempting fate if we got too close. After all, no one we'd ever spoken to had heard of two foundlings turning out to be brother and sister.

Now we were reluctant to let go of each other. All those years of isolation, of believing we alone had been rejected by our birth-mother, came flooding out. We had each other, a prize more precious than we could have dreamed of all our lives.

It all began in October when I told my story to Femail, making an appeal to my birth-mother to come forward. I didn't want to shame or expose her. I just wanted to know what demons had driven her to abandon me on that freezing night 36 years ago.

My own two daughters are the most important things in my life. I couldn't imagine being willingly parted from them and our house is filled with their photos lovingly taken by my partner David. As small babies, they each looked uncannily like me when I was born, with the same dark hair, the same dimple in the chin.

Yet whenever I compare our snaps, I feel incredibly moved. For my first baby picture appeared in a newspaper after I was abandoned on a doorstep on 18 February 1967. I was found by 16-year-old paperboy Hamish Brown while he was delivering newspapers to a block of flats in Grangemouth, Stirlingshire.

Naked and stuffed inside a flimsy pillowcase, Hamish thought I was a discarded teddy and was about to kick me out of the way when I made a sudden jerk. He got the shock of his life as he realized I was a new-born baby. Ice-cold and suffering from hypothermia, I was covered in blood and still attached to my roughly severed umbilical cord. Panic-stricken, Hamish raised the alarm and I was taken to Falkirk Royal Infirmary where nurses called me Heather.

Police appealed for my mother to come forward and my debut into the world was marked with that picture in the paper. Did she see it? Who knows, but another mum, Nancy Mitchell did.

Nancy, 27, was married to 31-year-old civil engineer Harry Mitchell, who worked for Cumbernauld Development Corporation. With two adored little boys Alan, aged four, and Neil, two, she longed for a daughter to make her family complete.

As she read of my abandonment, tears splashed down her cheeks. 'I want her,' she thought, feeling instinctively she was destined to be my mum. Especially when she got a call from her good friend Fanny Mills, a local foster mum in whose care I'd been entrusted.

'Come and see her, she's so beautiful,' Fanny said. Even now, there's a catch in Mum's voice as she recalls how Fanny answered the door with me in her arms. It was love at first sight and Mum was determined to adopt me.

So were lots of other couples. Everyone was interviewed by an adoption panel and among many questions, they were asked: 'How do you feel about the woman who abandoned her?? All except Nancy expressed contempt for my birth-mum for dumping me on the doorstep. They wanted her strung up, while Nancy expressed compassion.

She told the panel: 'I feel so sorry for her. She will miss out on bringing up this lovely baby and will never know the beautiful woman she will become.' She felt no anger towards what she presumed to have been a woman or young girl in a traumatic situation.

Nancy's genuine sympathy clinched the decision to allow her and Harry to adopt me when I was three-months-old. I became Alison Margaret Mitchell and joined the family in their smart three-bed semi in a middle-class part of Cumbernauld. I could not have wished for more loving parents and when, a year later, another new-born baby was found in Grangemouth, local social workers speculated that my birth-mother had gone back to abandon a second baby.

Today's DNA testing techniques were not available in 1968 so it was never established if we were related. I'd always wondered if there was a connection and when I told my story in the Daily Mail, I mentioned the existence of this second foundling.

Little did I think he really was related to me or that he would come forward. Besides, whoever he was, he may not even have known he was abandoned as a baby. For while I always knew I was adopted, I was 14 before I discovered I was a foundling.

I'd begun to wonder if I could trace my birth-mother out of pure curiosity and so Mum showed me that old newspaper cutting. It had never crossed my mind I'd been abandoned. It made me feel quite glamorous. But I'd also been handed a life-long puzzle and knew I'd probably never meet my birth-parents.

I also wonder if my being a foundling is what made me crave a child and I became very broody in my late teens. I wanted to know if there was something in my genes which would make me abandon my baby too. I wanted children to prove I would not leave them.

I wanted the lot. Marriage, babies, roses round the door. I always told Mum that if I didn't have children by the time I was 27, I'd go out and get pregnant anyway - and that's just what I did.

I was at a night-club when I saw Matt, 24, across the room. Good-looking, charming and like me, tall, with dark eyes, dark hair - a perfect match. He asked me to dance. We laughed and flirted - and ended up spending the night together.

Though aware I might conceive, my attitude was that if it happened, it happened and when it did, I was delighted. I had no intention of trapping Matt into a relationship. I'd always said I'd have a baby on my own and I sailed through my pregnancy. I loved it when I felt my baby kicking and felt fiercely protective.

When Jessica was born on 4 July 1994 my mum and aunt Myra were with me. I was with people who loved me in a safe, hospital environment. How different, I guessed, to when I was born. Now I'd experienced the physical agony of childbirth, I wondered: 'How the hell did you do this on your own?'

I could not imagine taking my baby and leaving her on a doorstep, still covered in the blood from her birth. I kept her by my side constantly, embracing motherhood from the start, but her father and I were never together.

I eventually met my current partner David in January 2002 and was thrilled when our daughter Emma was born on 5 April this year. It was her birth which got me thinking about who my birth-mother might be and that's why I told my story.

As far as I know, no one who has ever abandoned a baby has admitted it decades later, so I didn't hold out much hope. But after the story was published, Iain made contact. He was the other abandoned baby.

We spoke nervously on the phone, both excited that we were talking to someone who understood what it meant to be a foundling. We got on so well, we decided to meet two weeks later at my mother's house.

I felt quite calm about it. No way could we really be related. Stuff like that surely only happened in fairy tales. Yet as soon as I opened the door to him, I felt a strange bond. There was no hugging, no kissing or tears. Yet I somehow felt I knew him. It was as if I recognized him. My mother and his wife Helen, studied us both intently, searching for similarities.

Yes, we had the same smile, they concluded. Our children looked similar. Spookiest of all, our two old newspaper cuttings showed pictures of near identical babies. I still did not want to build up my hopes. It was too much to believe, yet not something we could ignore. Soon afterwards we arranged for private DNA tests and went to a Glasgow hospital to have swabs taken.

The results were supposed to take two weeks, but had to be triple-checked and took four. The wait was agony and we spoke on the phone several times a day. There was never any awkwardness, we spoke easily about everything. It felt as if we were soul-mates. But siblings?

It was only in the days before the results that I dared consider it. My baby daughter Emma was playing on the floor, when she turned and smiled at me. Suddenly, I felt I was looking at Iain. I got scared. It freaked me. Could it really be possible?

The more I got to know Iain, the more I liked him. I hoped we were related, but when we went to get the test results last month (Nov) the faces of the two doctors who told us, gave nothing away. They went through incomprehensible scientific data. I was so nervous I hardly took in a word. Iain was a complete wreck, breathing deeply and shaking.

Just get on with it, say it!? I screamed in my head, until finally came the sweetest words: Yes, you do have the same mother, the consultant said. I cried, big, loud sobs as I embraced Iain for the first time.

At last I can give you a proper hug, my sister!? He wept. Shaking, laughing and crying all at once, we made our way from the consulting room to where our partners were waiting. No words were necessary.

As soon as they saw our tear-stained faces, they knew and started crying too. We stood there in a big group hug. It was the most incredible feeling. There were two of us. Two abandoned babies. Two siblings.

I phoned my relatives and friends, bursting with elation. Each time I said I had a brother, tears steamed down my face. But it was in the car, as I drove home with David, that the emotion became overwhelming. I'm going to get my brother a small gift for every Christmas I've missed, I said. Then it hit me. I wept hard and long - for all the Christmases I had missed and for all the Christmases to come.

When my baby was born this year and I gazed upon her innocent face, wondering about my birth-family, I could not have imagine what lay ahead. This is better than finding my birth-mother. My feelings towards her haven't changed and I'm not angry towards her because she abandoned two babies.

Back in the 1960s, there were many prostitutes in Grangemouth and I figure she could have been a lady of the night who twice found herself pregnant by clients. Abandoning her babies was her way out. But if this was the way she lived her life, how is she living it now? Has she sorted herself out or is she still living the low-life? Iain and I have both had a middle-class up-bringing and if that is the case, we would not want her to have anything to do with us and our children.

If she does ever come forward, she will never be a mother to us. But Iain is my brother and always will be. No explanations are needed between us, we have a bond which will never be broken. Finding him is the best Christmas gift I could ever imagine.

Businessman Iain Hogg, 35, lives with his wife Helen, 33, in a detached Victorian house in Stirlingshire. They have three children - Megan, seven, Alana, three, and Jamie, five months. Iain was abandoned in August 1968 when he was a day-old

Alison is the most wonderful sister I could have wished for and I love her dearly. It's amazing to think that we have lived parallel lives for all these years each wondering why our birth-mother rejected us. More incredible still to know that she did it twice.

I was abandoned in Grangemouth on 29 August 1968. Dressed in a little cardigan and, like Alison, wrapped in a pillow case, I was dumped in a public toilet, just 100 yards from a police station.

It was 10.20am on a Summer day, when a woman called Iris Thorne called in at the Ladies to fix a run in her stockings. Suddenly, she heard a baby cry and when she pushed open a cubicle, there I was, lying on the floor.

Unlike Alison, I was plainly more than a few hours old. I'd been washed, fed and dressed. Even my cord had been roughly tied. Doctors estimated I was a day-old so my mother had kept me for a short while before abandoning me.

Having done it once before and got away with it when she had Alison, she was clearly bold enough to leave me in a public place in broad daylight. Police even came up with a description of her after someone reported seeing a woman going into the toilets carrying a bundle.

Aged 20-25, medium build, dark hair, sallow complexion, light-coloured raincoat and a dark woolly hat. Clearly she wasn't a frightened teenager and my feeling has always been that no matter how hard her life was, there is no excuse for abandoning a baby.

Thankfully, I was healthy and after being taken to Falkirk Royal Infirmary - the same as Alison was - I was given the name David Iain Grange. At three months I was adopted by Ian and Yvonne Hogg, both aged 30.

The Hoggs, who kept Iain as my first name, already had a son Philip, seven, and a daughter Hazel, four. They took in foster kids and I was one of them. As soon as Mum saw me, she says she fell in love with me and Hazel began nagging her: Mummy, why do we have to give all these babies back? Can't we keep one?? I became her brother and we were eventually joined by another natural son Jonathan and an adopted daughter Sarah.

I always knew I was a foundling and it never worried me because I was surrounded by so much love. I grew up in big country houses, enjoying a privileged upbringing, with Mum and Dad giving me everything they could. I was more concerned with my future than my past and was never ashamed of having been abandoned. It made me want to make something of my life.

But I felt nothing for my birth-mother. No hatred, no sympathy and I only really thought of her when I read of an abandoned baby in a newspaper. I'd study their picture and quietly say a prayer, thinking: Don't worry, life won't always be this hard. There is someone out there for you, Things will turn out OK. I knew, because I'd been there.

And yes, life was good to me. As a child I was always happy and smiling. As a teenager I was very outgoing, a jack-the-lad and popular with the ladies. Yet as I matured I also appreciated the value of working hard and joined my father in his engineering business at 17. I learned the ropes, working with him for 14 years until setting up my own industrial coatings business.

Along the way, I met my wife Helen when I was 19 and she was 18. We married four years later in 1992 and happily started a family together. I recall vividly how elated I felt when our first child Megan was born. I was so thrilled to have a blood relative.

She looked just like me in that newspaper picture when she was born, but the impact of my past only really hit me when we brought her home and I put her to bed for the first time. My birth-mother had washed me, fed me, and clothed me, just as we had our baby. But instead of tucking me up in a warm crib, I'd been dumped on a cold, toilet floor. As I held my first-born my eyes filled with tears. I turned to my wife and said: How could anybody leave their baby??

With each of my subsequent two children, I felt the same emotion. Not that I dwelled on it. I had my own family now, I didn't need anyone else. But then, in October, the most extraordinary thing happened when Alison's story was published.

Several members of my close family spotted the article and realized the enormity of what it could mean. They had no idea how to tell me and in the end my father just came out with it when I phoned him by chance.

He urged me to read the article. I think you have a sister, he said. Shocked and confused, I had no idea what he could mean. How could I have a sister when I didn't have a mother? It seemed a stupid thing to say.

I sent a colleague to get me a paper and flicking through the pages, I spotted this huge picture of Alison holding her baby daughter Emma. The little girl was the double of my daughter Alana at the same age. I went straight to my car and cried.

As I read the article and Alison's comments that there had been another baby abandoned the year after she was found I thought yes, yes, yes, this is me! Then no, no, no, it could not possibly be.

But there was only one baby boy abandoned in Grangemouth in 1968 - and it was me. I cried my eyes out all day, I couldn't work, I had to go home. Though my wife wanted to hold me, I couldn't let her. No one could say anything to me because I could not explain how I felt.

I went to my parents house and studied childhood photos. For hours I compared pictures of me as a child with the childhood photos of Alison in the newspaper. As a baby, we were identical. I wept again.

My parents had never known another baby was abandoned the year before in the same town and were keen for me to contact Alison. I didn't know what to do. I wanted to. I needed to. But what if we met and things didn't work out? It could all be so painful.

Yet there were glaring similarities between us, including the poignant fact that we were both wrapped in pillowcases. Oh my God, were they a matching set?

For the next few days I couldn't sleep, I couldn't eat, I couldn't talk to anyone about it. Eventually, I gathered up my courage and managed to contact Alison by phone. I'm the baby abandoned in 1968. Where do we go from here?? I said. I was so choked with emotion, I could barely speak,

Yet, after that first call, I felt elated. Even if we were not brother and sister, we had so much in common. I'd never met another foundling. I couldn't just walk away. We began phoning each other every day, eventually meeting.

I was so nervous, but Alison greeted me with a warm smile and I liked her immediately. Yes, I felt OK. Then I saw her baby Emma and almost burst out crying. She was so like my daughter at that age, I was overwhelmed.

It was hard to even dare hope we may be brother and sister, too incredible to believe, but, like Alison I felt I had to know. Even if we were not related, I felt we would always be friends. This would be the icing on the cake, but my, what a cake!

When the DNA results finally came through I asked the doctor if he would stand up in a court of law and swear we had the same mother. Yes, he replied. The proof is rock solid and my life has been altered for ever.

Just knowing that Alison is there has changed something inside me. I've never been one to show my emotions before, but now I've opened up. I feel more confident and much stronger. I want to tell the world that she is my sister.

But I don't want to find our birth-mother. Finding Alison is more than I could have hoped for and it means everything to know that I wasn't the only one abandoned. It's like starting my life over and no feeling in the world can beat it.

**For more information on Abandoned Individuals or stories like these,
please visit The Keall Foundation.**

www.keallfoundation.com

Also note that Ms. Angela Carless always seeks UK foundlings for future stories.

**Please contact Janet Keall at media@keallfoundation.com or 604-786-8581
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