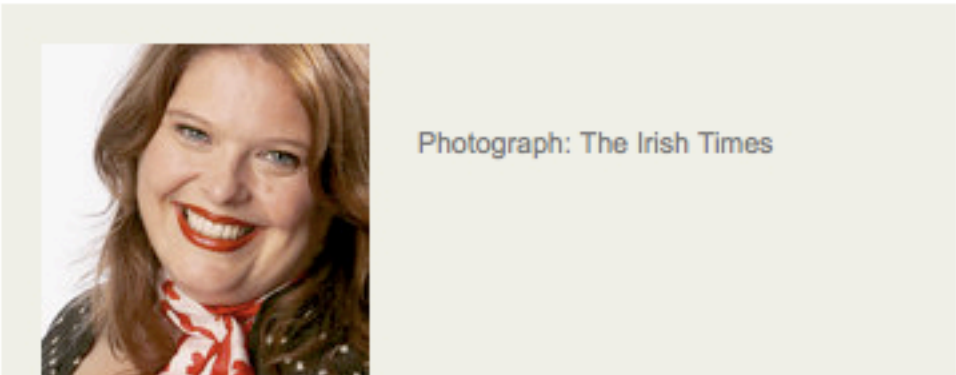


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Photo finish



Photograph: The Irish Times

In this section »

- Reversal of fortune

PEOPLE HAVE BEEN asking me the same question for a while. Feel weepy yet? Any tears? So I check the pregnancy book, the one I am too chicken to read without partially covering my eyes, and discover that many women at this stage of pregnancy become hormonally tearful at the slightest provocation. But no, I wasn't weepy. I was finding things funnier than ever, writes **Róisín Ingle** .

The unmissable Vincent Browne on TV3, for example, had me in nightly fits of giggles with his pithy put downs of self-important politicians. In contrast, even while watching the marvellously depressing Dickens drama Little Dorrit I couldn't muster a good weep. Yet again I was struck by the feeling that I wasn't doing this pregnancy thing right.

I spent a good deal of the time feeling the same as I ever did and thinking the three pregnancy tests I took might have been faulty. A decent morning vomit or a cry over nothing would have made it all seem much more real.

Then, a while ago, it happened. I was watching *Strictly Come Dancing* at the time. One of the judges was praising a contestant for how much she had improved over the course of the competition, and as the judge showered her with compliments the contestant flushed pink with pride and happiness. At that moment tears sprang, I believe the word is unbidden, from my eyes. "Ha!" I thought. "I'm feeling weepy! This is it!" I did a bit of channel surfing to test whether it was just a random spot of weepiness or the real deal. On *The X Factor* later that night, Diana was being kicked out and wee Eoghan ran on to the stage to hug her before she even had a chance to complete her swan song. As wee Eoghan blubbed, I too was in bits. Crying like a baby. Full blown, unexpurgated weepiness. Hurrah!

This article is supposed to be about my photographs of the year, and I'll get there soon, honest, but first I want to refer back to a column I wrote recently replying to a reader who had strong views on marriage. I've had an unprecedented number of supportive e-mails from readers in response, each one more eloquent and heartwarming than the next. I will get around to replying to them eventually, but at the moment what happens is I start to respond and then burst into tears, overwhelmed by the kindness of friendly strangers, which is not good for the wellbeing of my keyboard.

In another bit of end-of-year housekeeping, I want to thank readers for all their interest, advice and cards since I first wrote about being pregnant.

In addition, I owe you a bit of an apology. I haven't been completely honest about this pregnancy. Rather uncharacteristically, I've been holding back.

You see I've had lots of pictures taken of my precious cargo since I found out I was with child, and not surprisingly my growing collection of blurry black and whites are my photos of the year.

At 11 weeks I went for the first of many magical ultrasounds. I wanted to believe I was pregnant and for that I needed some proof. Our first hospital scan was weeks away, so we booked ourselves in to a place called Ultrasound Dimensions in Dublin. If you are a pregnancy scan addict like me (is there a support group?) I can't recommend them highly enough. Maybe it's the fact that they do 4D videos of your baby, but it's more likely the big bowl of mini-confectionary in the reception area, the calming music on the stereo and the scented candles on the shelves. It's like a high-tech beauty salon for unborn babies. I was very tempted to ask for a manicure along with my scan. I don't mind admitting I was nervous as I lay there, 11 weeks pregnant, holding my boyfriend's hand. Monica, the sonographer, squirted cold jelly on my stomach and told us to look at the screen. I saw it then, this busy white blob, only three inches long from crown to rump. And I heard it, too, 157 beats per minute, like a noisy neighbour banging a tight drum.

My boyfriend was transfixed, but after I'd heard the heartbeat (Jesus, listen to that, I really am up the duff), I found the images of the little blob kind of boring, to be honest, so I turned to my right to watch Monica, who was gazing intently at her screen.

I was looking straight at her face when I saw her mouth move to form a surprised "Oh". I thought to myself then: "Something is wrong, something must be terribly wrong." But Monica said: "No." And then she said: "It's just I think there may be another one in there." And then everything seemed to slow down as another busy white blob was revealed, another manic heartbeat broadcast. I started to hyperventilate and my boyfriend started to laugh and Monica said "Oh, my."

We planted two wild nutmeg trees in an eco-garden in India the week they were conceived. Oh my, indeed.