



Sunday 23rd September 2012, was the autumn, or autumnal if you want to be posh, equinox. Day and night the same length. Wow, I can hear you say. How exciting - not. But as wonderful as that may be, it's not why I wanted to start writing. Now THAT is exciting. Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin.

The story really starts about 10 years ago, shortly before April 10th 2003 when my mother would be reaching her 100th birthday. She'd always said she'd make the 100 and she wasn't wrong. One hundred years has to be celebrated in style, so we were in the planning stages of making her birthday special.



90 years young

Go back ten more years to the day before my mum's 90th birthday. She moved from her 4th floor council home in London to live with me and my husband Nigel. (Probably the most memorable event at that time was whilst I'd taken my mum back to London to return the keys to her newly vacated flat. A friend visited Nigel whilst we were out and asked where I was. Nigel, who's prone to muddle the odd word every so often, replied, "She's gone with her mum to London to give back the fleas to the cat." It took them both a moment to realise what he'd said. Then they both burst out laughing.)

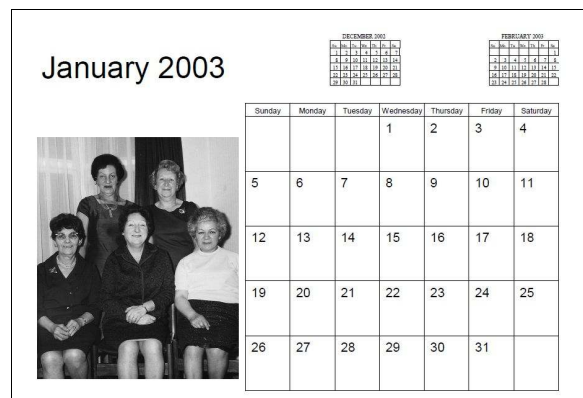
Known as Booba (Yiddish for Grandma) to everyone except me, after 10 years of living with her, unless I was speaking directly to her, I called her Booba too. We made a party for her 90th birthday which began an annual event. But for her 100th it had to be extra special. The first thing I had to do was to find out about her getting a telegram from the Queen. Did you know that centenarians now get cards not telegrams? Another thing I discovered was that they're not automatically sent out. Someone has to contact the palace to ask for one to be sent. Anyway, I found out when and how I had to apply so got that organised.

My next problem was birthday presents. Friends and family were all asking what they should buy her, but I couldn't think of that many things. After all, by the time someone has reached the grand old age of 100 they've got most everything they need. They say that everything happens for a reason and my reading a copy of the Reader's Digest at that time fits that description. In the December 2002 issue there was an article called Posing for Posterity by Andro Linklater which mentioned Commission A Portrait, an organisation which does exactly as the name suggests.

I have to digress a bit here to explain why I found this so interesting. When a baby's born it's only aware of itself, but gradually realises that other things and people exist. I don't know if you've had any involvement with very elderly folk, but their awareness seems to go into reverse. Although my mum was still as bright as ever, her view of what was going on around her was shrinking.

Loving company, she went to a Day Centre regularly where she was well looked after and encouraged to join in with group activities such as singing and making things. But more importantly it gave her a chance to socialise with folk of her own age. We first noticed the change in my mother when she brought home Easter or Christmas cards she'd made for me at the Day Centre, signing them with her name Hannah instead of Mummy.

Every year I create my own calendars using a different family picture for each month. At the start of my mum's hundredth year I made one where every month had a picture of her either on her own or with friends and family of her youth. I pinned it up on the wall where she could see it from her armchair. She loved it so much that I thought she'd equally love the idea of being the centre of attention whilst having her portrait painted. (See I told you I'd get there in the end.)



The gift problem was no longer insurmountable. I asked everyone for donations towards having my mother's portrait painted, reasoning this would have a twofold benefit: the attention of the sitting to make her feel special and she'd be able to see the image of herself take pride of place in our home afterwards. Additionally I'd be able to put a copy of the finished work on a thank-you card to send to everyone who contributed. So that was one less thing to worry about.

Now I just had to sort out the party. Booba's actual birthday fell on a Thursday, but many friends and family lived too far away for us to hold it midweek, so we decided to hold it the Saturday before the big day. In previous years we'd had parties both at home as well as in a local pub where they'd allow us to take our own food in exchange for the extra revenue they made from selling drinks. This year would have to be a pub do as our house wouldn't be big enough for the numbers we expected for this centenary birthday. Also, to make the day really special I arranged for the card from the Queen to arrive in the morning of the party.

A week before the event, with our food lists in hand, Iceland and Tesco must've wondered what hit them. We'd ordered a special cake to be made by a friend and after several unsuccessful attempts to get numbers and candles for it, we managed to get exactly the silver ones I wanted from a local shop. Bowls and dishes went into bags together with unopened packs of crisps, peanuts and the like, ready to be opened at The Crystal Palace. Preparing the rest of the food the day before was like a military exercise, running backwards and forwards to nearby friends who were either offering overnight space in their fridges for prepared dishes or had volunteered to take things down to the Crystal for the landlady, Tina to store there.

I made an appointment for Booba to have her hair done on the Saturday morning. Being a very feminine old lady, she didn't need much persuasion to also have her nails done professionally. Nailz said they could fit her in after the hairdresser. Nigel collected the 100th birthday cake and we agreed my friend had made a brilliant job of it. The silver numbers and candles were the finishing touches.



My daughters Mara and Barbi and their respective partners and families arrived at our home the day before the party, staying overnight to be with us for the start of the big day. Looking out of our kitchen window the next morning I saw the postman walk past the houses opposite. Watching him I wondered if he was to deliver THE card, but when he walked past I assumed not. Then he turned and with a huge smile on his face came to our front door and pressed the bell. We all rushed to answer it. The postman told us that he'd been excited too as this was the first royal card he'd ever delivered. Even though I'm not a royalist I have to admit to having a tear in my eye as Nigel took the envelope from him.

In order for you to get the experience as it happened, I've included pictures of this important missive, which by the way are not actual size. They are, however, shown in the same order as we saw them. You'll probably not be able to read the text on the pictures so it's typed out beside each one.



ROYAL MAIL PAID
UP TO 500G

I've enlarged the stamp on the blue envelope which was handed to Nigel so you can see how different it is from those we're used to. I wonder if they use a different colour if they're sending out something which weighs more than 500g.

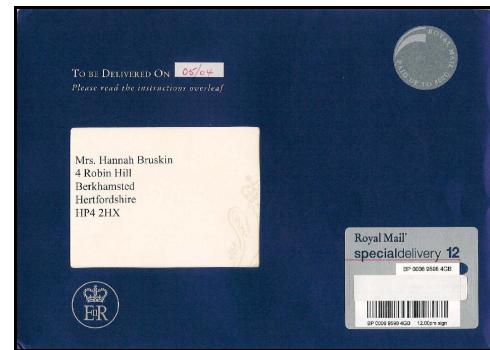
Anyway, here's the whole envelope complete with Royal Mail Special delivery stamp.

It's marked in no uncertain terms:

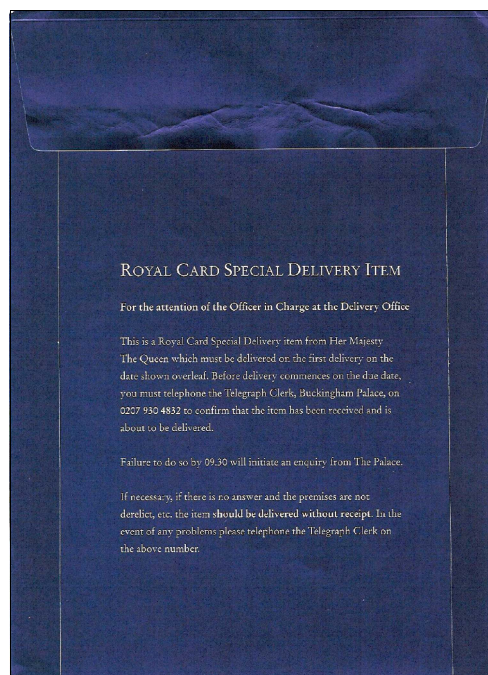
TO BE DELIVERED ON with 05/04 the date of the party written in by hand.

Underneath, in italics is the following message:

Please read the instructions overleaf



So we did as we were told and turned it over. This is what we saw:



ROYAL CARD SPECIAL DELIVERY ITEM

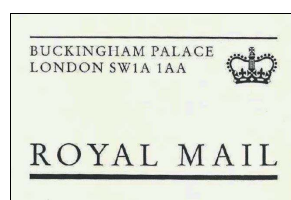
For the attention of the officer in charge at the delivery office

This is a Royal Card Special Delivery item from Her Majesty The Queen which must be delivered on the first delivery on the date shown overleaf. Before delivery commences on the due date, you must telephone the Telegraph Clerk, Buckingham Palace on 0207 930 4832 to confirm that the item has been received and is about to be delivered.

Failure to do so by 09.30 will initiate an enquiry from The Palace.

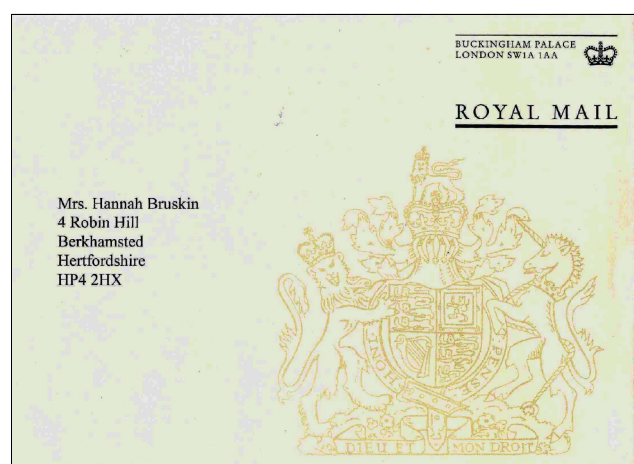
If necessary, if there is no answer and the premises are not derelict, etc. the item should be delivered without receipt. In the event of any problems please telephone the Telegraph Clerk on the above number.

Wow, how important does that sound. Booba was so excited she couldn't get the envelope open so she asked me to do it for her.

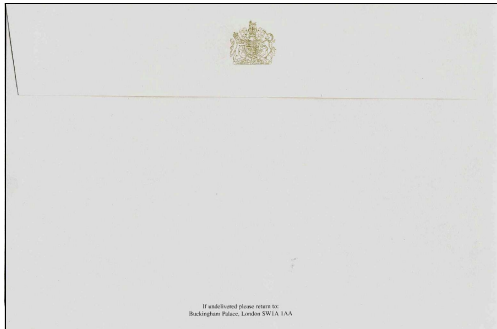


OK, so inside that envelope is yet another one with yet another unique stamp! I'm not

sure which I prefer. What about the watermark on the envelope? I t couldn't be seen easily so I adjusted the pic so it would show.



Now wait till you see the message on the bottom of the back of this envelope!



Would you believe, after all the previous instructions, that the message at the bottom centre of this envelope states:

If undelivered please return to:

Buckingham Palace, London, SW1A 1AA

So how would anyone know it was undelivered unless they'd opened the first envelope?

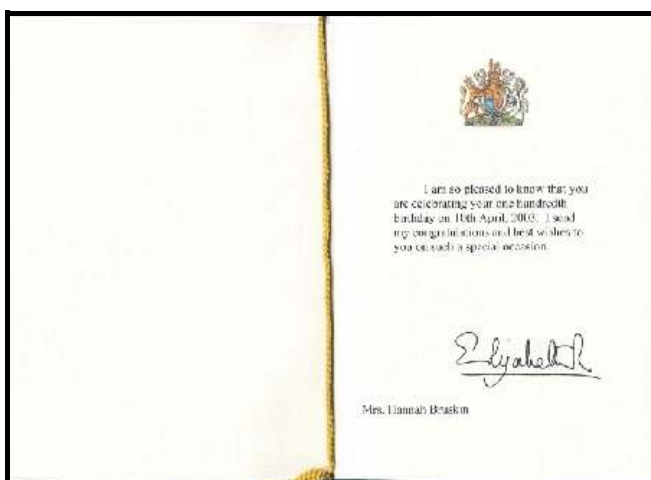
Maybe the staff at the sorting office were supposed to remove the blue envelope before they delivered this one. Who knows?

Anyway, if you've never seen a royal congratulations card, this is what the front of one looks like. You don't need me to tell you who this is do you? It's a good picture of her isn't it?

Her Majesty's image takes up the whole of the card but I put it on a white background to show the golden cord ending with tassels down the edge. This looks much more impressive in the real thing but it's difficult to really show the effect any other way. (I wish I had web-site wiz-kid friends who might be able to make it clearer without losing the tassels but as I haven't I hope you don't mind putting up with it as it is.)



Here's the inside of the card. Again to make it easier to read, I've typed the text in beside it.



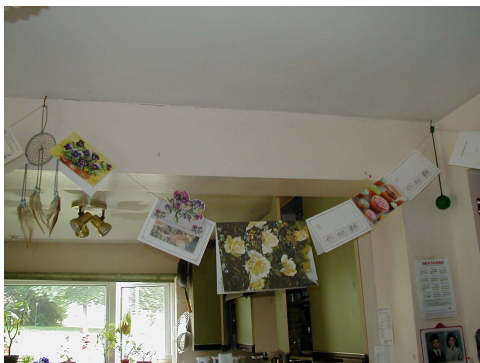
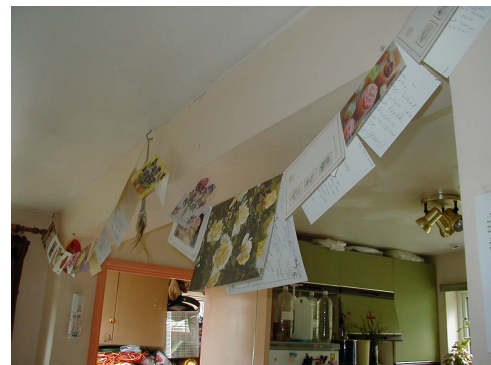
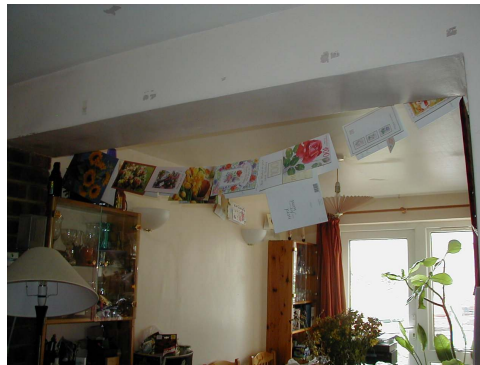
I am so pleased to know that you are celebrating your one hundredth birthday on 10th April 2003. I send my congratulations and best wishes to you on such a special occasion.

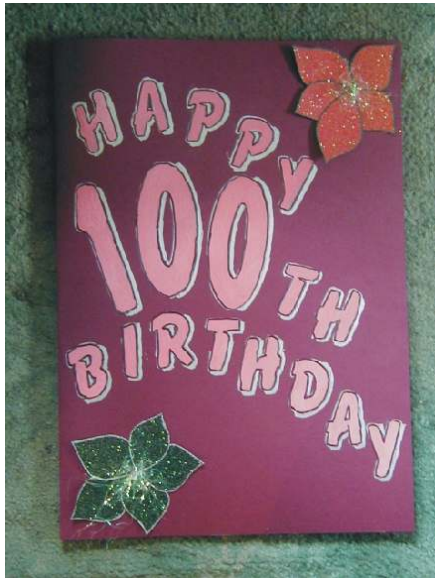
The royal signature is followed by my mother's name

Mrs Hannah Bruskin

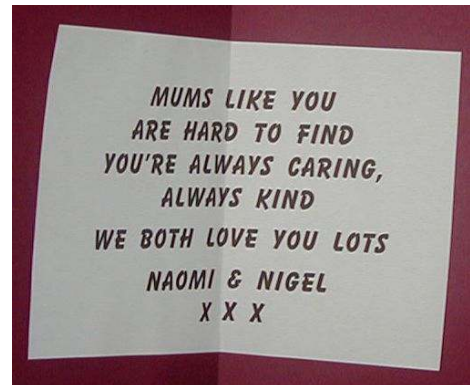
My son-in-law reminded me that the royal birthday card with Queen Elizabeth II's signature should be protected from damage. Knowing Booba would want to show it to everyone at her party, I put it and the accompanying envelopes into transparent sleeves, which I then fastened into a ring binder.

By this time my mum had been inundated with other birthday cards which had been delivered by post or hand. These included another official one from Andrew Smith, the then Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. We fastened up the four strings we usually use for Christmas cards, then when they were full we fastened more strings around both the living room and the dining room. More were stuck to the glass panels on our doors and onto walls. The pics below show just a small sample.





Knowing Booba's eyesight was deteriorating, I designed a huge card with a giant size greeting so that she could read it herself. Above and below the huge wording on the front, I fastened two sparkly flowers I'd made using rough, glittery paper which I'd cut into separate petals sticking extra sparkles for their centres. Inside I printed my message in extra large text.



Never being one to hide my glory if I can help it, I stood my card on top of a unit by the TV in full view of everyone. On top of the TV I placed another card



with an especially large text message from my elder daughter Mara. Later in the day these two teddies joined the display.



The one in a dressing gown was given to Booba by Pat, one of the team of Carers who came round to our house to help her get ready each day. Isn't he cute? I presume Pat chose one dressed like that as she regularly helped Booba in and out of her night clothes. I'll tell you later on about the other one.

OK, so back to events of the 5th April 2003. As the delivery of the royal card had been so early in the day, we were all still in our jim-jams. The party wasn't starting till the afternoon so we didn't have to rush to get dressed. Which was just as well as the 'phone didn't stop ringing. There were calls from friends and family who needed directions to find the pub as well as from people who wanted to wish the birthday girl many happy returns 'cos they wouldn't be able to be with us.

Finally dressed and ready, Barbi collected the remaining party food and drove her younger daughter Becki-Jo and both my sons-in-law down to the pub. Mara

went with her niece Katherine to collect the decorations and balloons. She 'phoned from outside the party shop. Between giggles she managed to say that they could only just manage to fit her, Katherine and their purchases in the car. Now balloons were squeaking round their ears, squishing round their heads and completely blocking her view of the windscreen. Chuckling she asked if Nigel would please come and take some of them otherwise she wouldn't be able to drive back because she couldn't see where she was going. Sadly one pink balloon got lost in the transfer but between them they delivered the remainder safely to the venue.

Once at The Crystal Palace, Mara and Nigel arranged the decorations whilst waiting for the first guests to arrive, whilst Barbi came home to take me and Booba to the hairdresser in the High Street. She helped me get Booba into her wheelchair then went back to help at the pub whilst my mum and I made our way to the salon.

The sun was shining and mother and I chatted, agreeing how lovely the warmth felt on our faces. But when we got to the hairdresser I couldn't believe my ears. They had no record of the booking! Fortunately I knew several of the stylists and realising the importance of the day, one of them made Booba's fine, almost white hair look beautiful. From the hairdresser we went to Nailz where my mum's nails were filed and painted in a pretty pink which toned well with her maroon dress with brocade trimming at the neck. Sneakily I had mine painted at the same time.



When both of us had talons fit for the occasion, we again enjoyed the good weather as I pushed the wheelchair the short distance over the canal bridge, the sounds of

splashing water from the lock gates in our ears as we reached The Crystal Palace alongside the towpath.

Becki-Jo met us as we went inside into the sea of balloons and banners and a rousing cheer from the packed room. My heart swelled as I saw family and friends, some of whom hadn't met up for years, had all made the effort to be with my mother at this special birthday party. Tina had arranged the tables so that my mum could sit comfortably out of



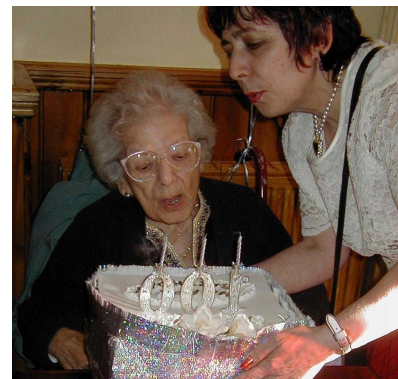
droughts from the open back door (it would have been a shame to have it closed in such glorious weather) but close enough to the loo should she need it.

The noise of a hundred conversations surrounded the birthday girl as she sat in comfort whilst relatives and friends took turns to sit close to her and chat. Although smoking hadn't yet been banned, it wasn't too smoky in the pub 'cos all the windows were open. The sounds of laughter, animated conversations and clinking glasses filled the room whilst children grabbed at the streamers dangling from the balloons. Tina had placed two tables in the centre of the pub floor for the food to go on, but at one point during the afternoon there were so many people inside the room that we had to devise a one-way system of walking round.



Fortunately the pub's location beside the canal and the glorious weather meant that lots of folk could take their food and drinks to the tables outside along the towpath where they could also watch the ducks and barges going to and fro.

Eventually though it was time for the cake and a rousing chorus of Happy Birthday. Booba needed a bit of help blowing out the candles, but eventually the deed was done.



Of course I'd forgotten to bring a knife hadn't I. Fortunately Tina came to the rescue. (See how chuffed I am about that.) Once Booba was armed with the knife, everyone with a camera wanted to take a picture of the birthday girl cutting her cake.

By the way, I haven't forgotten about how I started this saga. But you've probably gathered by now that I don't want to miss anything out and as so much happened before the event I started with, I've got to ramble on a quite a bit more before I get there.



OK so where were we? Oh yes - the party. Guests presented boxes of chocolates and a few mysterious

wrapped gifts to be opened later. All the bouquets and bunches of colourful blooms I placed carefully on the floor beside my mum's chair. Their perfume mixed with that of the daffodils Tina had bought for my mum which she'd arranged in a vase on the mantelpiece. Envelopes with donations towards the portrait were carefully stashed away till after the festivities.

As the guest of honour at the party was such an old lady, we knew she'd get tired so the party wasn't to end too late. Most of the guests had gone by the time we loaded a very weary Booba and all her gifts into the car for the drive home. Everyone agreed the decorations were great, the food was good and they'd had a great time.

Once home with a tired little lady settled into her armchair, whose legs had been specially raised to make it easier for her to sit down and get up, we counted the donations - over £600. I knew I wouldn't have time to check the website for at least a week as there were still a few things to organise ready for Booba's actual birthday a few days later. So rather than stress about it, I left the on-line investigations till I had time.

I'll skip over the next day as that was simply R & R. (Rest and relaxation if you're not familiar with the phrase.)

MANY a mum makes her daughter's wedding dress - but not at the age of 92!

That shows the tenacity for life of Hannah Bruskin who is 100 today and whose lifelong mantra has been Never Give Up.

Hannah's generally known as Booba - Yiddish for grandma - and is still bright as a button.

She moved to Berkhamsted from London 10 years ago following a fall and now lives with her 58-year-old daughter Naomi Stevens and husband Nigel at Robin Hill.

She still insists on going up and down the 15 steps to the car park to the waiting ambulance every weekday to go to Berkhamsted Day Centre.

"I am so very, very lucky. I have a lovely home and Naomi and Nigel to look after me and I am so proud of her for what she has made of herself. And the ambulance drivers are so very kind and all the staff and other helpers who care for me. What more could anyone want?"

Sewing has always been Booba's main hobby, hence the wedding dress eight years ago - and in red velvet too, a notoriously difficult material to sew. She also loves children. "I was a children's nurse during the war at St George's Hospital in the East End - a St John's nurse."

"I miss doing things," she said. "I don't like sitting without anything in my hands."

"I don't feel 100, although I

do get tired," she admitted.

On Saturday there was a big party of relatives and friends (including two grandchildren and two great grandchildren) at the Crystal Palace in Berkhamsted and today at Berkhamsted Day Centre they'll be putting out the flags to mark the day.

Said Booba's daughter Naomi: "She says she's proud of me - well, we're very proud of her and I am so lucky too, to have had my mum for so long."



I think it was the following Monday when a guy from the local paper called round to take pictures of the birthday girl. (I'm not exactly sure if I got the day right but I know the article was published in the Berkhamsted and Hemel Gazette on the 9th April.) I wasn't planning on being included in the shot but the photographer insisted I should be.

I've given myself artistic licence to combine a scan of the actual article (I've tried to make the text big enough to be read easily) with one of the pictures the photographer took that day. Hopefully no-one will object.

This picture is, quite simply, one of the nicest of me with my mother that was taken at this memorable time. I now keep the original displayed in my

living room. It's not in a frame but is stuck on the first page of a book with a sparkly red cover. The remaining pages are blank. Maybe one day I'll find other pictures to fill the rest of them and make it into a proper photo album, but for now it's just a special place.

Let's now skip to Thursday, the actual date Hannah Bruskin turned 100. The day started as usual with a Carer helping her get washed, dressed and breakfasted ready to go to the Day Centre. But this time the visit would be a bit different. What am I talking about? It was going to be a lot different.

Although the Day Centre staff had joined us at the big 100th party the Saturday before, many of her friends at the centre were too old or frail to get to the pub. There was obviously some sort of divine intervention as Booba's birthday coincided with her usual day at the centre. Being the first of their elderly 'guests' to reach the magic century, the staff had arranged their own party for her, organising food and yet another special 100th birthday cake.



Booba been told about the party so knew that Nigel and I would be driving her to the Day Centre instead of the regular driver. Everyone cheered when we arrived and she glowed in the attention. After sitting down in her usual chair by the window she was inundated with cards and presents from her friends. Having brought the royal birthday card in its folder so Booba could show everyone, I stood it up on the table in front of her together with all those she'd just received.

But I'd organised something else that she didn't know about. Booba's favourite TV programme was *Birds of A Feather* with Dorien Green (played by Lesley Joseph) being the character she loved most. (In those days Damien was the Jewish next-door neighbour of the other two main characters, Sharon and Tracy. In the new series she's the lodger.)



I'm a great believer in 'If you don't ask, you don't get,' so I called my friend Janet who I knew was Lesley Joseph's first cousin. Janet had already received her invitation to the Saturday party, but I asked her to find out if Lesley could join us as a surprise guest. Although she couldn't make the Saturday event, I was thrilled to learn that she was happy to come to Berkhamsted and personally wish Booba happy birthday at the Day Centre party on the Thursday.

Having passed on the times of the party, Janet arranged for me to pick Lesley up from Berkhamsted station, giving her my 'phone number so she could let me know the time of her train. When the call came I told my mum I'd forgotten something at home and drove to the station to meet Lesley's train. Instantly recognisable, there was no need for the traditional carnation. I just had to let her know who I was. Elegant with impeccable make up, Lesley wore a large brimmed black hat. In *Birds of a Feather*, Dorien is such a larger than life character that I was surprised at how petite she is. I'm only 5' 3" and she's shorter than me. But the size of her personality more than made up for the lack of inches. Lesley was softly spoken but so chatty and friendly that the short journey to the Day Centre passed very quickly.

My mum's initial surprise verged on disbelief. She knew Lesley's face so well but couldn't remember where she knew her from. Eventually though, the penny dropped and Lesley quickly made friends with everyone, staff and elderly folk alike.



This is where the second teddy referred to earlier makes its appearance. Not only did Lesley bring my mum a card, she also gave her a really soft furry little chap, wearing a stripy top and a black waistcoat. (Booba had never had a doll as a child, let alone cuddly toys. I bought her the first doll she'd ever owned for her 90th birthday.) As you can see from the picture, she was absolutely over the moon with her gift and cuddled it for most of the

afternoon. In fact, there are very few pictures of Booba that afternoon without it. (As soon as we got home it was given its place of honour on top of the TV.)

Chatting easily to staff and the elderly 'guests' of the Day Centre alike, Lesley made everyone feel comfortable even before she took her coat off.





Sitting next to Booba the whole time she was there amid the hum of conversation all around, Lesley had infinite patience with everyone wanting to take pictures. (I wonder if I'll ever be slim enough to look as good in a white trouser suit like her's.) Eventually though, after cups of tea and lots of chatting, Lesley had to leave. She shook hands with the staff, said goodbye to all the other elderly 'guests' and gave my mum a farewell birthday kiss before I drove her back to Berkhamsted station.

I was so grateful to Lesley for putting herself out for my mother, that I wanted to offer her something as a thank you. I'm an Astrologer and the only thing I could think of was to offer to calculate and interpret her birth chart. On our way to the station I suggested doing it. Although keen on the idea, she was in too much of a hurry to catch her train to discuss the information I needed.



Back at the Day Centre the party was still in full swing. Booba was presented with a huge bouquet of flowers from the staff. After another rousing chorus of Happy Birthday which everyone there joined in with, she was helped up to do the honours cutting the birthday cake. But soon after



I noticed my mum's head dropping down as she got tired. So we packed our weary, but happy, little lady into the car with her cards and gifts and organised our return home and a well-earned rest.

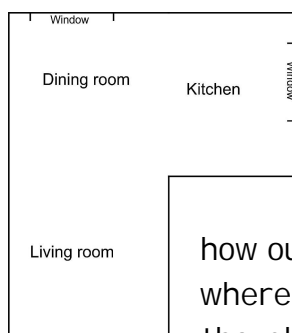
The next day I looked at the Commission A Portrait web site and realised the £600+ we'd collected in donations wasn't enough to have an oil painting done by even the cheapest of their artists. Ever the optimist, I contacted the company to ask for suggestions. After I'd explained the situation, Maria their represen-

tative, suggested a charcoal drawing would be cheaper than oils. She directed me to a page on their website which showed the work of an artist whose drawings were incredible but his prices were far more than our meagre collection.

After my telling Maria that sadly we still didn't have enough for even a small portrait, she contacted the artist. He offered to do the work for the amount we'd collected but couldn't start until September. I had misgivings about waiting that long (which were well founded as Booba died in July.) So Maria contacted a different artist Jane Allison who wanted me to 'phone her. Jane specialises in painting old ladies and had been commissioned by the Matron of St Pancras Hospital to paint several of the inmates - ladies of advanced years (one was 102) - in order to give them all the same type of emotional boost as I was hoping to give my mother. Jane's pictures on the website were excellent but they were all done in oils and priced upwards of £4,000.

Hoping Jane would charge less for a charcoal work, I called. My heart dropped when she told me the drawbacks of charcoal drawings: they need to be treated and stored more carefully and they cannot be amended so easily as they're being worked. Jane told me she prefers oil paints, but excited at the prospect of painting a subject of such a great age, she too offered her work in oils on canvas for the amount we'd collected - exceptionally generous considering this was less than a sixth of her normal price!

To reassure concerned family members, Jane assured me that Booba wouldn't suffer any discomfort as there would be no obligation for her to sit still or hold a pose. In fact Jane said she'd encourage Booba to talk in order to gain as much of her personality as possible to put into the work.



So now let's cut to the time of the first sitting. I'd had a few 'phone conversations with Jane and had arranged the room according to her instructions. She wanted to be able to work with natural light behind her and a comfortable seat for Booba facing her. I tried to describe here in words how our living and dining rooms and kitchen form an L shape and where the windows are, but was making a complete hash of it so I thought a diagram would make it a lot easier.

Before Jane arrived we moved our table from its usual position by the window at the end of the dining room, leaving space for her to set up her easel. In front of, and facing the window we placed Booba's usual armchair so it would also catch the light from the window in the kitchen.

Wearing the dress she'd worn for her 100th party at the Crystal Palace, Booba declared herself quite comfortable in her new spot. When Jane arrived she set up her easel so she had her back to the window and the daylight would shine on her subject. True to her word she chatted to Booba throughout, asking her questions about herself and showing a genuine interest in her replies. (I recorded this conversation on tape too.)

Have you ever seen a painting being created from nothing? It was absolutely amazing. I was fascinated, alternating sitting on a chair beside Booba, with standing behind Jane so I could see what she was doing. First it looked as if a hole appeared in the canvas through which one eye peeped out. Then gradually the hole got bigger and two eyes looked out. This hole continued to grow until Booba's entire face was peeping through - just her face, nothing else, no hair or neck - almost as if she was actually emerging through the canvas. Jane carried on working swiftly and confidently building up the rest of my mother's body and behind her the armchair and cushions she rested on.

After she'd done as much as she could for the initial work, Jane took her camera out and snapped Booba from different angles. Before she went home she looked through photos we had and chose some to borrow to help complete the imagery.



We arranged a second sitting but sadly Booba died before that could take place. Jane finished the painting from the photographs then invited us to her studio to see it. I asked her to make a few minor changes including swapping the earrings she was wearing at the time of the first sitting with those she loved the most and wore more than any others. Booba's Star of David couldn't be seen in the original work, but as she wore that constantly Jane painted it in as if it had been there all along. Once home, we took photos of our painting so that we could keep it safe and still show everyone how brilliant it was. You can see from this picture why everyone who sees the portrait remarks how her eyes follow you around.

Jane told me that she once painted a man who was in pain and that pain showed in his face. She tried several times to change it, but in the end told him to get

to the root of the pain to remove it before she'd be able to paint him without it showing. To me that proved that her talent is more than just physical. I believe she paints psychically too and that's why our portrait is so alive.

Since getting the painting home, we've had it professionally framed. It now has pride of place in our living room where my mother can look out and see all our visitors. There's no doubt in my mind that her spirit resides inside that work of art. I often speak to her knowing she's always with me and even introduce new guests to our home to her.

But that's not the end of the story. Do you remember I started talking about the autumn equinox? Well that took place on the 23rd September 2012 but it's what happened the day before that I really wanted to tell you about. So again, are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll carry on a bit longer to tell you about the second time I met Lesley Joseph.

Early in 2012 I received a promotional booklet of forthcoming events at the Watford Colosseum. On the front cover was a picture of the naked cast of Calendar Girls in which Lesley Joseph would be appearing. Not only did I want to see this show, but I also wanted to honour my offer to Lesley of a birth chart. In order to speak to someone at the theatre and try to get a message to her, I booked my tickets by 'phone. The person I spoke to said I could send an email message to Lesley care of the box office and they would pass it on. (Appendix 1)

I always look forward theatre visits and was especially excited by this one even though I hadn't had a reply to my email. On Saturday the 22nd September 2012, we arrived early at the Watford Colosseum for the matinee performance. When I collected my tickets from the booking office I asked if they could find out if my email message to Lesley had got through. After being redirected to several different members of their staff, I finally managed to meet Lesley's Tour Manager Anthony. He arranged to take me and my family backstage after the performance to say hello to Lesley.

In spite of just having finished a performance on stage, so quite likely to be tired, Lesley again was lovely. She remembered her visit to my mum's 100th party in Berkhamsted and had no objections when I asked if it was ok for me to write about that visit to try to get it published. I promised to get in touch with Anthony to see if she wanted to read it before it was submitted to any magazines.

There was another performance that evening so Lesley didn't have much time, but she was kind enough to pose for yet another picture with me.



Knowing she was working whilst at Watford I didn't ask for her birth details but have since managed to find them on-line. With the aid of my pendulum to get the exact birth time I've calculated her chart. From this I can see how self motivated she is, how particular she is with whom she relates to and where her friendliness, gentle nature and deep feeling stems from. Unless she tells me differently though, any more interpretation is for her ears only. Maybe our third meeting will enable me to do just that.

Appendix 1.

As mentioned in the body of the email, I attached to the email one of the pictures taken at the Day Centre party and a picture of my mum's portrait.

EMAIL TO LESLEY c/o Watford Colosseum

Hi Lesley

It's over 9 years ago that, after a request from Janet, you were kind enough to visit my mother on her 100th birthday and even bring her a present. She cuddled that teddy bear for the rest of the day. Sadly she died later that year but not before she'd had a sitting for a portrait, for which all family and friends had clubbed together. It now has pride of place on the wall in our living room and everyone agrees, she's in there watching over all of us. I've attached a picture of that painting together with one of you sitting with my mother and me on your visit in April 2003.

Incidentally, Janet told me that your own mum reached that grand age recently too. Mazeltov to her. I did ask Janet to let you know that my offer to draw up and interpret your birth chart still stands. (When we met, you sounded interested in having it done.) I'd love to be able to do it as a way to show you how much I appreciated your visiting my mother that day. I don't know if Janet's had a chance to pass on the message yet. She did say she rarely sees you as you've been so busy, so I thought I'd mention it.

The reason I'm writing now though is that I'll be in the audience for the matinee performance of Calendar Girls at the Watford Colosseum on the 22nd September. It would be great if you could spare a few minutes to say hello. (I'll be with my husband Nigel, who you met in 2003, my daughter, her husband, my granddaughter and a couple of friends.) I do appreciate that you'll still have another performance to do that evening, so fully understand if you don't have the time. (I was told I could send you this by email to the stage door e-address, so have asked them if they would be kind enough to pass on your reply.)

If we get a chance to renew our acquaintance on Saturday, please let me know if you want me to do your chart. Otherwise you can get in touch using any of the above contact details if you want it done.

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