

Isn't it nice to know that some celebrities sometimes do good things without hoping for extra money or publicity. This accolade applies to Lesley Joseph who took time out of her busy schedule to visit my mum on her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.



I've actually met Lesley twice. You'll probably know that she was, and is again playing Dorien Green, one of the three main characters in Birds of a Feather. Once the next-door neighbour of Sharon and Tracy, she's now Tracy's lodger in the new series.

Since her kindness to my mum she's been one of our favourite stars. So when I saw that she was going to be in All Star Family Fortunes on TV in January this year, my husband Nigel and I were keen to watch it. On the show Lesley won £30,000 for Stage for Age and Age UK. When asked about her choice of charities she spoke about her own mum recently celebrating her 102<sup>nd</sup> birthday. This brought back to me the first time I'd met Lesley 11 years ago.



90 years young

In 1993, ten years before that TV show, my mother moved in to live with me and my husband Nigel. It was the day before she turned 90. A very sociable lady, I knew she'd thrive on having a social life of her own, so arranged for her to have regular visits to the local Day Centre where she soon became a great favourite with staff and other guests. Back at home her throaty chuckles mixed with my laughter and the gruffer sounds of Nigel's enjoyment as we sat in front of the TV watching her favourite programme, Birds of a Feather. Dorien Green, played by Lesley Joseph, was the character she loved most. We felt particularly involved as my friend Janet and Lesley are first cousins.

We made my mother a party to celebrate her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, then another every year for the rest of her life. With her centenary imminent and wanting to make this one really special, we planned a party at a nearby canal-side pub. Weekends being easier for family and friends to join us, we organised it for the Saturday before her Thursday birthday. I arranged for my mum's congratulatory card from the Queen to be delivered that day too.

Although the Day Centre staff were going to join us at this big 100<sup>th</sup> bash, many of my mum's friends there were too old or frail to get to the pub. So as the first of their elderly 'guests' to reach the magic century, the staff arranged their own party, organising food and a special 100<sup>th</sup> birthday cake. There was obviously some sort of divine intervention as her birthday coincided with my

mum's usual day at the centre. So she was going to have two parties, the second one being at the centre on the actual day she turned 100.

I'm a great believer in 'If you don't ask, you don't get,' so knowing how fond my mother was of Dorien in Birds of a Feather, I called my friend. 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. I was thrilled to learn that although she couldn't make the Saturday event, Lesley was happy to personally wish my mum Happy Birthday at the Day Centre party the following Thursday.

There was great excitement at home when the birthday card signed by Queen Elizabeth II was duly delivered on Saturday morning. Knowing my mother would want to show off this special card, we put it and the envelopes it came in, into protective sleeves in a ring binder to keep them safe.

The party at the pub was a great success. Friends and relations, some not seen for decades, had joined us. Guests presented several boxes of chocolates, a few mysterious wrapped gifts to be opened later and bunches of colourful blooms which I placed on the floor beside my mum's chair. Their perfume mixed with that of the daffodils the landlady, Tina had bought for my mum and arranged in a vase on the mantelpiece.



The sound 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 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.



On the 10<sup>th</sup> April 2003, five days after that all singing, all dancing party, it was Thursday, the day of my mother's arrival into this world 100 years earlier. She knew she was going 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.

Instead of the regular driver, Nigel and I drove my mum to the Day Centre. As she walked in everyone cheered and she glowed in the attention. After sitting in her usual chair by the window she was inundated with cards and presents from her friends and an exquisitely smelling huge bouquet of flowers from the staff. We'd brought the folder with the royal birthday card and stood it on the table in front of my mum together with the cards from all her friends.

But she didn't know about her surprise guest. Having passed on the times of the party, Janet had 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, but once there Lesley quickly made friends with everyone, staff and elderly folk alike. Not only did Lesley bring my mum a card, she also gave her a really soft furry little teddy bear wearing a stripy top and a black waistcoat. Never Having had a doll as a child, let alone cuddly toys, (I bought her the first doll she'd ever owned for her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday) my mum was absolutely over the moon with her

present and cuddled it for most of the afternoon. (As soon as we got home it was given a place of honour on top of the TV, sharing the space only with other special items, such as home-made cards with huge wording so that she could read them even with her diminishing vision.)

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.







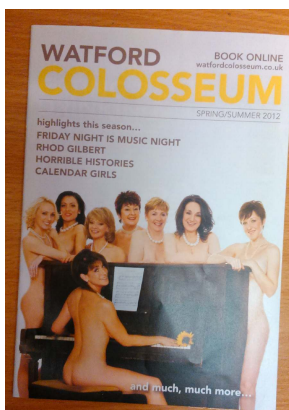
Without her coat, Lesley looked lovely in a white trouser suit. Sitting next to my mum amid the hum of conversation all around, she had infinite patience with everyone wanting to take pictures. (Nearly all those with my mum in them also include her new teddy.) Eventually though, after cups of tea and 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 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. But it wasn't long before I noticed my mum's head dropping down as she got tired. After another rousing chorus of Happy Birthday, which everyone joined in with, and the cake was cut, we packed her with her cards and gifts into the car and said goodbye to them all.



Once home, the excitement of her birthday celebrations finally over, I watched as she sat in her armchair with its specially raised legs to make it easier for her to lower her frail arthritic body. Tired but happy, she'd enjoyed both her parties.



Although my mum died the following July, the story doesn't end there. Several years later, 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 play, 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.

I always look forward to theatre visits and was especially excited by this one even although I hadn't had a reply to my email. On Saturday the 22<sup>nd</sup> 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 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 to say hello to Lesley after the performance.

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 100<sup>th</sup> 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. Lesley still had an evening performance so didn't have much time, but for our second meeting she was kind enough to pose for yet another picture with me.



Knowing she was working whilst at Watford, I didn't ask Lesley 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 people 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.

### 2014 Additional

On the 14<sup>th</sup> May this year I went to see Lesley again at the Watford Colosseum, this time she was in Hot Flush. Billed as The Naughtiest Musical in Town, I'd been keen to see it, but at the same time thought it worth trying to see Lesley yet again. I printed off the above into a booklet and put it into an envelope so that if I wasn't able to actually meet up with her again after the show, I could at least leave my writing with someone at the theatre, to be passed to Lesley for her to read.

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I left my mobile number with someone in the box office and kept my fingers crossed. Before the show started I was contacted by her tour manager who apologised that Lesley had too many people waiting to see her after the show, but I could see her in the interval if I wanted to. Well that was a no-brainer - of course I did.

When the curtain fell after the first half, I met the guy I spoke to at the arranged place then he took me backstage to meet Lesley in her dressing room. Except it wasn't just her that was in there. Her friend, obviously off-screen as well as on, Linda Robson was in there too! Wow - two celebrities for the price of one!

Lesley was as lovely and natural as before. I told her about the article and gave her the envelope, emphasising that I didn't expect her to read it there and then as I knew she would have to go back on stage very soon. She promised to read it



when she had a chance. She was so friendly that before I left her I asked if I could have a hug and another picture. I had the hug, then the tour manager took a picture of me not only Lesley but also with Linda. (You can see him in the mirror in the background taking the picture too.)

As time was so important I didn't mention anything about Astrology or doing Lesley's chart interpretation. I'm being philosophical about it and if it's meant to happen it will. If it's not, it won't. But I'll keep the offer on the back burner. You never know what's round the corner do you?

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