

## MEDIA RELEASE

A family were reunited for the first time since the pandemic at a surprise afternoon tea to celebrate a special 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Rugby-born great-grandmother Brenda Pitcher, who lived in a prefabricated steel 'Nissan hut' after the Second World War, was overjoyed to meet up with some of her closest relatives at the historic Coombe Abbey Hotel near Coventry.

Since March last year she has been in a support bubble with son Doug and daughter-in-law Jan in Rugby and had not seen her wider family.

To mark the occasion and her first trip out, the family chose Brenda's favourite dining spot where they enjoyed a traditional Abbot's afternoon tea in the Grade I-listed hotel's Garden Room restaurant.

She was greeted by a table decorated with 100<sup>th</sup> birthday balloons, a beautiful bouquet of fresh flowers from in-house florist - Flowers at Coombe - and a 100<sup>th</sup> birthday cake.

Doug said: "My mother has a sweet-tooth and is partial to a scone, so we thought this was the ideal place to come. It's the first time we've been able to give her a hug!

"We had a lovely afternoon and the staff at Coombe Abbey were so kind to my mother. The afternoon tea and service were excellent, plus the flowers were a nice added touch. We can't thank Coombe Abbey enough for a wonderful celebration."

Ron Terry, operations director at Coombe Abbey Park Ltd, said: "We were so pleased to have been able to play a part in making this a memorable occasion for Brenda and her family, who travelled across the country to be here. They had not all seen each other for 15 months."

Brenda credited her long life to not smoking, keeping active – until a few years ago she was a keen rambler – and "sleeping well".

But she doesn't deny herself the odd treat. Doug added: "She definitely likes her chocolates – and has been known to eat an entire box!"

The new centenarian has two sons, three grand-daughters – one of whom had driven up from Devon - and five great-grandchildren.

Brenda was 19 when the Second World War broke out and still clearly remembers the bombing of Coventry in 1941. "All day and all night. Terrible it was," she said.

"The war didn't really interfere with daily life, just the blackout. One or two houses were bombed in Rugby. One in Bennett Street.

"I rarely went to the Nissan Hut. If I was going to die, I would sooner die in bed."

Brenda's favourite pastimes have included travelling, especially to Devon and Cornwall, day trips to Coventry by bus and walking with her local rambling group. She also visited the Rhine, Paris, Austria and Rome with friends after she was widowed following the death of husband Ray in 1975

Brenda has survived her three brothers and continued to care for her younger brother up until his death on January 1 2001.

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