PRESS RELEASE

100 Year Old Veteran Celebrates Centenary at Black Country Living Museum

4 Feb 2017

Today Black Country Living Museum pulled out all the stops for a very special guest on his birthday weekend: 100 year old veteran James “Vivian” Wollason.

Viv, as he is known by his family, was born right next to the Museum in Park Lane, Tipton on 5 Feb 2017, but never quite got around to visiting. So today, for his birthday, he and eight members of his family had a specially planned day courtesy of the Museum and its staff. Viv was personally greeted by his own chauffeur, Costumed Character Geoffrey Bramwell, who drove him around the Museum in a 100 year old Black Country-made car.

Costumed Characters then all gathered to surprise Viv in the Bottle & Glass Inn, greeting him with specially-made cake, balloons and a hearty chorus of ‘happy birthday’. Gary Rhodes of the British Army (Royal Yeomanry, B Squadron, Dudley) also paid a special visit to congratulate him on his centenary, and to personally thank him.

Viv fought in WW2 in the 29th Armoured Division where he worked as a Tank Engineer. He was called up at 23, and was 29 by the time the war was over. He worked in offices in Horsley Bridge and had an assistant typist shortly after, who would later become his wife of 55 years.

Viv said: “today has nearly brought tears to my eyes. It’s very kind. Some have asked me what ‘my secret is’ and to that I say this: good food, good wife and everything in moderation. That is what I tell everybody. I still keep active, I live independently and I enjoy cooking and gardening so the truth is I don’t feel old at all!”

Viv was born on 5 Feb 1917 and says he “was born in the first world war, fought in the second but won’t bother with another.” He received his telegram from the Queen on 4 Feb and looks forward to another planned birthday party on 5 Feb where he will join his extended family to celebrate.

-ENDS-

For more information contact:

Abby Bird
PR & Marketing Coordinator

Black Country Living Museum
About the Museum

Established in 1978, Black Country Living Museum is one of the UK’s leading open-air museums. Designated by Arts Council England for the quality and national significance of its collections, it attracts c300,000 visitors each year. Visitors can immerse themselves in the sights, sounds, smells and tastes of the past as they uncover the rich industrial heritage of the region. They'll explore 26 acres of shops, houses and industrial areas and in doing so get a unique insight into the contribution and impact the Black Country. Costumed demonstrators bring to life the stories of some of the most hard-working, ingenious and influential people you could imagine, making this an experience few others can match.