



A new chapter

→ By Isobel Moran

After such a successful day, surrounded by friends, families and locals from our community, we reflect back on the grand opening of our transformed and now dementia specialist care home St Catherine's.

Saturday 11th June marked a hugely important chapter in St Catherine's history and for Wellburn as we welcomed guests to celebrate with us, the grand re-opening of our St Catherine's home, after its transforming refurbishment into a specialist dementia home.

The launch day turned out to be a huge success, attracting hundreds of guests and marking the beginning of a new era for St Catherine's at the forefront of dementia care in the region, which we were delighted to share with everyone who attended. The launch day had a real carnival feel to it, hosted in St Catherine's main garden with some much-loved guest highlights including fairground game stalls, live music, an array of food and drink, and an animal 'pet therapy' corner. The day turned out to be an

informative day of family fun, with plenty of younger guests enjoying the party games, food and even an interactive kids treasure hunt we had on offer. All touch points throughout the day had a subtle approach to dementia awareness too, highlighting an important message to our guests of how different aspects can help those living with dementia. Even the children's treasure hunt highlighted this key message, with each item on the list introducing different areas of dementia such as memory, smell, and sounds, all in a child-friendly and engaging way. And it really was a lovely moment for us to see how the children interacted, took interest, and learnt as they went along.

Tours of St Catherine's new sensory garden designed by award-winning garden designer, Luke Arend, also →



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← proved particularly popular with guests as they got to experience each area of the new sensory garden designed perfectly with dementia in mind from plants that stimulate all the senses without overpowering scents to plants that residents would have had in their own gardens to help trigger past memories. The garden hosts a mix of areas with hot stimulating planting and other areas with calm relaxing planting, alongside dementia-friendly use of colour, texture, and shade throughout. Walking around the garden, there’s an array of different garden ornaments and features, again designed to stimulate memories for our residents living with dementia.

Our staff played a huge part on the day too, helping to show guests around, explain our story and introduce everyone to the new

concept of St Catherine’s. We even had a few special guests show up for the big day including the Sheriff of York, Suzie Mercer, who officially cut the ribbon to announce St Catherine’s open, whilst wishing the home all the best in its new venture. We were also joined by Care England’s Chief Executive, Professor Martin Green OBE who, sharing his thoughts on the project, said “This is a ground-breaking project, developed specifically to offer support services for people with early-onset dementia, and the partnership with Dementia Forward will ensure that St Catherine’s is going to transform the lives of people with early-onset dementia. I have no doubt that St Catherine’s is a State of the art facility that will become a regional, as well as a local centre of excellence to support people living

with dementia, and I was honoured to be at the grand open day, to pay tribute to the fantastic work done by Wellburn and I want to commend Rachel and her team for the care and support they offer and for the expertise in Dementia care which has been developed over many years.”

Speaking to guests at the open day, Wellburn’s Chairman Rachel Beckett added “It’s been a long journey to get here, but standing here, with such a fantastic turnout, amongst so many friends and guests from our local community, I just feel a huge amount of pride. We’ve had such incredible support from so many people throughout the journey, and all of my staff have been exceptional. The opening marks a new, exciting chapter in the history of St Catherine’s, Wellburn Care Homes, and dementia care in the region.”

For St Catherine’s to be where it is today, the complete transformation required more than 2 years of research, development, planning and design, an excess of £1.5m invested and a deep dive into the world of specialist dementia care before even a single brick was laid. And it’s safe to say, the hard work has certainly paid off as St Catherine’s now stands at the forefront for dementia care in the region with a very bright future ahead. Now a beautifully modern dementia specialist care home, with state-of-the-art facilities, Wellburn hopes St Catherine’s will not only become a local centre of excellence, but regional too, offering unrivalled support to those living with dementia, whilst furthering our understanding →



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← and raising awareness of the condition and its implications within families and society.

Rachel’s vision for St Catherine’s was to completely re-examine how a care home can look and feel for someone living with dementia and that’s exactly what she has managed to achieve. Every aspect of the home has been carefully crafted with dementia in mind, from the colours used to the innovative technology such as circadian lighting systems by Neil MacDonald, dementia-friendly catering by Apetito and a brand-new sensory garden. All designed to make life with dementia as comfortable as possible.

The newly transformed St Catherine’s now hosts 32 larger rooms with state-of-the-art facilities also including ‘The Manor’

- a specialist 7-bed unit providing much-needed specialist dementia care for younger residents (65 and under) living with early-onset dementia. With the help of Jill Quinn, who runs a charity called Dementia Forward, Rachel was inspired to add this additional specialist unit to the home to help younger residents with dementia to socialise and live more independently. Dementia Forward also hold day services for people under 65 with dementia and have been very influential in helping Rachel to develop St Catherine’s to where it is now.

So, after a successful launch day, it’s now time for St Catherine’s and Wellburn to start a new chapter in the history of dementia care in the region. “The future looks bright and we’re looking forward to getting on with what we do best - caring,” says Rachel. ■

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