

Fairfield: The real happiest place on Earth

By Amelie Lambie-Proctor

Whoever made the sweeping statement of a claim that Walt Disney World is the happiest place on earth had clearly never made it to Fairfield Residential Home in North Oxford. I would even encourage Finland, the apparent happiest country in the world, to look at the stellar example set by, in my opinion, the greatest place in the universe any human being could call home. As of May 2024, the world's superlative older relative, my Grannie, conveniently named Annie, moved into Fairfield following a hip operation. This move has been the definition of every cloud has a silver lining, so thank you Grannie for taking one for the team! Words cannot do justice to the haven that is Fairfield, and I can only hope my choices from the Oxford lexicon will begin to communicate its brilliance. I fear even such a prestigious guidebook lacks tools to shepherd an appropriate paragraph.

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Walking into Fairfield is like getting a hug from your favourite person. As you meander through the traffic of Zimmer frames and overtake superiorly paced wheelchairs, the beautiful consequences of not having to worry about your heating bill hits you. Luxury for students and decreased circulation souls alike. Picasso-like artwork made by the residences, family pictures of staff and seasonal decorations line the walls to create a homely feel – it is magic! Conveniently for those of us who succumb to the bliss of a nap, Fairfield is one big bed! A sleep-enabling environment, you will never be judged for nodding off at the dinner table.

I can confidently say that Fairfield is the ultimate place to be held hostage if kidnapped. Complete with hairdresser, doctors' visits, and home cooked meals three times a day, you would hope search efforts for your finding would be suspended.

Reminiscent of an immaculately planned day at primary school, the optional activity list for the day is multifaceted. From carol singing to jazz days, there is always something to do, and the best part is, someone else has organised all!

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Now this may seem paradoxical for a habitat for those whose wisdom surpasses their sprinting ability. However, without a doubt the greatest place in this residential care home is the smoking area. To understand the level of quality, in Durham terms this is equivalent to Jimmy's outdoor space. An escape for both staff and residences, my Grannie and I have spent hours there – connecting in both talk and silence. From an outsider's perspective they encourage their residents to have fun, and instill a sense of humanity into them that I think can be stripped away as one ages and is often communicated to as though they are literally a school child.

The staff team are wholly responsible for this atmosphere and are adored by my Grannie. So much so, even as her only grandchild, I fear my reign as favourite may be ending. I cannot thank them enough for making my Grannie feel at home. Grannie Annie can sleep in until midday, have food brought to her in bed, and have friends up in her room; she is comparable to a teenager, and brilliantly the staff are the always the patient, interested loving parent, who will be there no matter what.

With endless biscuits and tea (and sometimes prosecco) on tap, I have to apologise to Mr Disney. Even as a fellow dyslexic, I'm going to have to reject the claim that forced fun and spoiled children could even be placed in the same category of greatness as the Nirvana for geriatrics (and apparently their younger kin!) that is Fairfield.