



A New Beginning

1945 to Present Day



Following the Second World War, the comradeship of Rauceby's staff was celebrated with the Rauceby Club. Wing Commander Eric Jewesbury was the driving force behind the formation of the club in 1947, which was open to all former wartime members of the Officers' Mess of RAF Hospital Rauceby. Membership included important figures who were recognised for their specialities, including several who were later knighted.

In 1947, the hospital returned to its former use. After the RAF moved out of Rauceby, many improvements and updates were required to the site, leading to an era of rebuild and refurbishment up to 1950. This also coincided with the catchment area being increased and the renaming of the site to Rauceby Hospital.

During the 1950s and 60s, more changes to the hospital took place, with the addition of an Occupational Therapy Unit, the transformation of the isolation hospital into a Male Adolescent Unit and the closure of the hospital's farm. The 60s also saw government policy mark Rauceby Hospital, along with all other mental health institutions, for closure by the end of the century.

Major changes in the treatment of mental health patients reduced the need for Rauceby Hospital; in 1986 patient numbers had dropped to 350, compared to its peak of 590 in 1958, and initial plans to close the hospital were put in place in 1992. Five years later, Rauceby Hospital closed for the final time on 17th December 1997.

On 11th September 2002 David Wilson Homes purchased the former Rauceby Hospital site with a view to undertake a major project of rejuvenation and redevelopment, and bring this derelict site back to life.

By this time, North Kesteven District Council had published the Rauceby Hospital Development Brief, which set out the principals that were to be followed in the future development of the site, with the sole purpose of encouraging its re-use, to prevent it falling into dereliction.

Although some aspects of the existing hospital could not lend themselves to re-development, or were unworthy of retention due to their poor condition, the most important aspects have been retained and have been carefully integrated within the new development.

The Airing Courts, with their new landscaping and restored octagonal shelters, and the mature woodland in particular, have helped shape this unique development and can now be enjoyed by all.

A Haven for Wildlife

The Rauceby Hospital site has proved to be a major haven for wildlife, with several protected species also calling the area home. Extensive ecological surveys carried out during the early stages of the development planning in 2002 discovered great crested newts and pipistelle, brown long-eared, natterers and whiskered bats all living within the site.

As all of these species are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, ensuring their safety was vital to David Wilson Homes, who took steps to ensure the De Vessey Village development did not pose any threat to the needs of these animals.

GREAT CRESTED NEWTS

Newts were found to be living within the ponds of Sleaford Golf Club and its surrounding Site of Special Scientific Interest, located next to the De Vessey development. As these amphibians are able to travel distances of 500 metres, there was real concern the species would be affected by on-going building work at the site and in particular, the main access road to De Vessey. Building work was completely put on hold for nearly a year until works had been completed to relocate the newts and install specially designed newt culverts into the road, allowing the species to cross safely underneath the road. Wildflower areas, log piles and hedgerows have also been added within the site to provide the ideal habitats for hibernation.

BATS

Four bat species were discovered roosting in a number of the existing buildings on site, which had to be demolished due to their poor condition, and this required alternative sites to be found. To avoid displacing the mammals, boxes were placed in the surrounding woodlands and two purpose built Bat Roost buildings were constructed, retaining suitable roosting, breeding and hibernation conditions.

WOODLAND

The woodland areas across the site have been retained as vital habitat for native species such as birds, including the rarely seen woodpecker, mammals including bats, rabbits, badgers and even deer, and reptiles, such as the rare great crested newt, grass snake and common lizard.

Plans have been put in place to ensure that the woodland areas are managed and preserved for future generations.

David Wilson Homes has worked in conjunction with appointed ecologists, Faulks Perry Culley & Rech, appointed arboricultural consultants, Symbiosis Consulting and Natural England, to ensure that the conservation needs of the site have been met at every possible opportunity and residents at De Vessey Village can now enjoy the excitement of living amongst some of Britain's rarest species.



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