



A MEETING OF MINDS

Alzheimer's Society

Lawrence Fisher was “delightful, the perfect gentleman” – a husband, a father, a keen golfer and an RAF veteran who’d flown with the forces during the Second World War. “The best photograph I’ve got of him was in his RAF uniform,” says his wife, Morella Kayman MBE.

But when Lawrence developed dementia in his early fifties, Morella felt totally isolated. “I was in my thirties and had no idea whatsoever – I couldn’t understand why he was forgetting things,” she recalls. “I was running a business, I had a young child who was at school and there really wasn’t any support.” Determined to ensure that no one else would struggle alone, in 1979 Kayman co-founded what is now Alzheimer’s Society. “Nearly 40 years later, what’s been achieved is amazing,” she says. “Everybody knows what dementia is now.”

Today, Alzheimer’s Society supports thousands of people each year. “Around 850,000 people across the country live with dementia, and that’s going to increase to over a million in the next few years,” says Chief Executive Jeremy Hughes. “Our ambition is to support everyone with a dementia diagnosis by 2022.” As the UK’s leading dementia charity, Alzheimer’s Society has three key strands: providing support to those with dementia and their carers; transforming communities so they

are more inclusive and campaigning for social change; and investing in research. “Crucially,” says Hughes, “everything we do is led by the wishes of people living with dementia and their carers.”

Besides its helpline and online resources, Alzheimer’s Society delivers local services across the UK. “One way people can get involved is as a ‘Side By Side’ volunteer, a new initiative that helps people with dementia to keep doing the things they enjoy with the support of a volunteer,” says Hughes. “If someone’s got an RAF background, for example, we’ll match them with a likeminded volunteer so they can reminisce, talk about the things that interest them, or even visit the RAF Museum together.”

Alzheimer’s Society volunteers also run local “Singing for the Brain” groups and drop-in Memory Cafés, providing opportunities for fun and contact. There’s even a dedicated veterans’ café in Plymouth. “It’s about giving people with dementia the space to be themselves and a part of society,” says Hughes. “There’s a real dementia movement growing: we’ve got thousands of volunteers and fundraisers, and over two million Dementia Friends, all committed to creating dementia-friendly communities. Together, we’re united against dementia.”

www.alzheimers.org.uk