**Film Transcription**

**Rewind - Leonard Cheshire Disability, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund**

**Title:** Living Proof

**Duration:** 25 minutes and 41 seconds

**Transcription Date:** 30th July 2016

**Archive Number:**

**Summary of Main Points**

0:27 - History of Le Court

1:16 - Residents of the house

3:53 - Life and activites at the house

4:35 - Work carried out by the residents

6:30 - Joy

8:00 - Resident whose name is unclear

9:28 - Odd jobs

10:07 - Paul

10:39 - Laurie

11:02 - Brian

11:33 - The workshop

12:44 - Outside help/visitors

16:50 - Religion

18:41 - The house magazine

19:57 - The Welfare Committee

22:45 - Married couples

24:24 - Conclusion

**Start of transcription**

0:00 [no speech] to 0:27

0:27  **Barbara Beasley:** This is Le Court. Have you ever wondered what happens to badly disabled young people if they can't get into a Cheshire home? Either they live at home, which is often lonely and purposeless, or they may feel a burden on their families - or they're in chronic wards, which is nearly always a travesty of life, surrounded by the senile and dying. Le Court is the first Cheshire home where in caring for a man dying of cancer, Group Captain Cheshire began what was to grow into the worldwide, wider Cheshire mission for the relief of suffering.

1:02 [No speech] to 1:16

1:16 **Barbara Beasley:** The original house was a decaying Victorian mansion, and the Carnegie Trust gave the money for this building.

Snowy was living at home before he came here; his family was out at work all day, and as the flat was upstairs and there was no lift, Snowy used to sit at the window and watch the [unclear] go up and down.

1:40 [No speech] to 1:47

1:47 **Barbara Beasley:** Elsie doesn’t always look as worried as this. Being film-- filmed is a nerve-wracking business. She was in a chronic ward for 5 years; another girl about the same age was in the same ward and a spastic girl who couldn't talk, so Elsie looked after her. All the other patients were elderly, and her only, outlet was to spend the day in the occupational therapy department. Min you it was a better hospital than most. She was in...ward for 8, not 38.

2:19 [No speech] to 2:36

2:36 **Barbara Beasley:** Joy's toes have grown strong and flexible, and she can do amazing things with them, in spite of her spastic movements. People who have never been able to use their hands learn to use their feet and mouths instead. Albert was given the full works at the rehabilitation department of Kings College Hospital, and was taught how to be independent. With his gadgets and techniques, there are few daily activities he can't manage. He washes and dresses and feeds himself, he does his hair with a comb fixed to an arm on his bedhead, he turns his wireless on and off with a tool held in his mouth, and he earns his own living by painting with the brush held in his mouth.

3:22 [No speech] to 3:30

3:30 **Barbara Beasley:** Almost time for breakfast. The lift is large, and largely automatic, with controls at wheelchair level, so that if you can wheel yourself about you can get up and down stairs yourself.

3:42 [No speech] to 3:53

3:53  **Barbara Beasley:** There are 39 residents, and the noise and the banging is sometimes past belief. The wall between the dining room and TV room, and the glass doors between the dining room and library fold back, making a hall for films, pictures and parties. Perhaps the high spot of the past few years was a review the residents did a couple of years back which ran for 2 and a quarter hours. It was really good. The outside help we had, the producer, musical director and stage manager were either experienced amateurs or professionals, gave our home-grown talent polish.

4:32 [No speech] to 4:35

4:35 **Barbara Beasley:** Doris has been coming and giving treatment for 12 years, and [name unclear] has been having it for 10, so both of them w...can remember the early struggles in the old house. They were exciting days, [unclear to 4:50 ]...something always did turn up in the most miraculous way.

4:53 [No speech] to4:55

4:55 **Barbara Beasley:** Shops open for half an hour twice a day, and Maggie runs it. Harry serves behind the counter. The turnover last year was 1800 pounds, and 173 of that was profit. It sells the small necessities - sweets, cigarettes, stamps, writing paper, shampoos. Since we're 3 miles from Liss and 7 from Petersfield, our nearest town, we need a shop. Besides, the profits go into the welfare fund.

The welfare fund pays for anything I've bought like the films, keeping the two TVs and the wirelesses in each bedroom going, paying for the petrol for outings on the bus, and all the other activities run by the Residents' Welfare Committee. You can have up to a pound's worth of credit on the book.

After the shop closes at 11 o'clock, there's mid-noon coffee in one of the two TV rooms. Each channel has its devotees who look on the other lot with faint disdain. Nobody's dull while Derek's around; he's from the outback of Norfolk.

6:09 [No speech] to 6:30

6:30 **Barbara Beasley:** Joy is making a scarf for her uncle Frank. Most people work in the mornings, but whether you work or not is entirely up to you.

6:39 [No speech] to 6:55

6:55 **Barbara Beasley:** Joy's accomplishments are many and varied.She lights Andrew's cigarettes, but has been known to break one in half and throw it away when she thought he'd been smoking too much.

Once she picked Snowy's pocket with her feet, while he was t...absorbed in conversation. And she's the only girl in Hampshire who flirts with her feet. A girl with quick feet and a soft heart, she can't bear to see anyone cry. A couple of months last summer, we had a young French girl here who dripped slow tears of homesickness the whole of her first day. She said to her at supper that night, and after a few minutes Joy was shedding tears too, of sympathy for Christianne. The room that Joy shares with Elsie is the gathering place for crowds of pop record enthusiasts. Her record player is in no danger of rusting from disuse.

7:56 [No speech] to 8:00

8:00 **Barbara Beasley:** Susan's like Albert: she's almost entirely independent without using her hands, but unlike him she can use her feet as hands. Considering she threads her needle at leg’s length, her eyesight must be well-adapted too.

8:16 [No speech] to 8:31

8:31 **Barbara Beasley**: She's so full of vitality you feel worn out just to think of it. She uses some of her energy to type Joy's letters and take her walking for miles in the summer but there's still enough left to set off a volcano. One of the embarrassing moments she treasures is at a fancy dress party. She and a 6 foot 3 medical student had to demonstrate courting in a caveman voice. She tried to [unclear] the dining room door, along the corridor and then at the TV room door. She showed proud bruises for days after.

9:07 [No speech] to 9:28

9:28 **Barbara Beasley:** Washing the smalls is Evelyn’s household work. All the jobs are voluntarily done; Muriel helps in the kitchen in the morning, Doris delivers the post, Mitt takes the papers round and so on.

9:42 [No speech] to 9:59

9:59 **Barbara Beasley:** Here's Snowy coming across the bridge to the workshop which is separate from the house.

10:04 [No speech] to 10:07

10:07 **Barbara Beasley:** Paul's another person who was in a chronic ward, from when he was 17 ‘till he came here at the age of 19.

10:14 [No speech] to 10:17

10:17 **Barbara Beasley:** Actually he doesn't often do wood-turning because his main job is working as treasurer and news editor of the Cheshire magazine. He writes too and paints; a painting master takes a class once a fortnight.

10:31 [No speech] to 10:39

10:39 **Barbara Beasley:** Whenever anybody wants a watch mending or needs [unclear] for a pair of shoes they come to Laurie. His official job's workshop manager, and he orders materials, helps people and supervises generally. Laurie's cameraman of a film unit, so Paul had to shoot this.

10:58 [No speech] to 11:02

11:02 **Barbara Beasley:** Brian's a member of the film unit as well, a sound technician and cutter. He's printing headings on writing paper here. Brian recently passed his primary exams to be a Methodist local preacher, no mean achievement in the house where a quiet corner to study was practically impossible to find. And he's the first of us to go abroad for a summer holiday. He and a girlfriend went to Spain last July.

11:30 [No speech] to 11:33

11:33 **Barbara Beasley:** All the usual crafts are done in the workshop, and the welfare fund buys articles as they're made, and markets them so that the makers get immediate payment. They earn the selling price less the cost of the materials. The goods are sold on order as a rule, and when we exhibit at fairs we sell a quantity and take more orders. 4 local housewives help in the workshop, [unclear] every weekday morning. They're having their training as occupational therapy, but this isn't really occupational therapy anyway. These voluntary helpers and the many more are called 'slaves', a term of affection. Some come once a week to do the mending, one does the ironing, several come one or two afternoons a week and help with the baths, and feeding at meals, and all the myriad jobs there are in a place like this. There's also an army of slaves who come from a distance and stay. An executive at B.E.A. who works one weekend a month washing up and laying tables.

12:41[No speech] to 12:44

12:44 **Barbara Beasley:** University students who work here in their vacations, the research cast or the B.B.C. producer, who come as orderlies from time to time, the book-binder, school girls and boys, a conservative agent, nurses, teachers, the list is endless. As well as their labour which is invaluable, they all do normal hours of duty, they bring their personalities and interests to enrich our lives. Le Court is like a tapestry compared with the home-spun of most ordinary life.

There's a paid permanent staff as well of course - a warden, a secretary, and the matron who has a catering diploma as well as her nursing qualifications. 3 more state-registered nurses, and 4 women and 3 men who work as nursing orderlies look after our personal needs. Kitchen staff, pantry staff, cleaning staff, the maintenance engineer, all play their part, and again not only their labour is important within a small isolated society like Le Court, it would be a tragedy if they were a ‘we and a they’. Nearly everybody is called by their Christian names here.

14:02 [No speech] to14:05

14:05 **Barbara Beasley:** Independence Unlimited is the name of an organisation started by a local factory manager. 5 or 6 men come every Tuesday evening to the workshop, and make devices to help us overcome the limits set by our physical inabilities. All the gadgets have to be built to the individual's needs, because no 2 problems are identical.

14:28 [No speech] to14:31

14:31 **Barbara Beasley:** They made Albert’s easel, which slides up and down with a slight pull on the cord under the pallet[unclear to14:37]. Albert has achieved great things with his painting. He got a scholarship from the Mouth and Foot Painting Artists' Association, and for 4 years worked long hours perfecting his technique. Then, the July before last, he was accepted as a member of the association. Last May, he flew to a congress of the association at Zurich and was made one of the 25 full members in the world. This means that the association pays him a good salary, and has the first right to any of his pictures.

15:12 [No speech] to 15:15

15:15 **Barbara Beasley:** There is an Autumn view from Le Courtby Albert in the association's calendar this year.

15:20 [No speech] to 15:24

15:24 **Barbara Beasley:** We try to have at least one sort of factory outwork at any time, but it's difficult to arrange transport so far out in the country.

15:33 [No speech] to15:48

15:48 **Barbara Beasley:** Here they're assembling electrical components, trimming toy roofs and folding calibrated paper into stacks of a thousand. Quite a few people prefer outwork, because frankly it pays better. A large portion of this film shows people working, for the simple reason that it's an easy activity to show. But it shouldn't be thought that work is the most important part of our lives. Some of us work because we really enjoy it, some because we want the money to do other things, and some because we like the company of those we work with. But as there's no necessity to work, the only rule and that's an unwritten one, is that nobody should be late for meals. It assumes a different value from the usually accepted one, that work is a good thing in itself. When your physical activities are limited, you have the opportunity to explore other sides of your potentialities.

16:47 [No speech] to 16:50

16:50 **Barbara Beasley:** Religion is an essential element to many, though not all. About a third of us are Roman Catholic, a third Anglican and the rest either non-conformist or nothing in particular.

17:03 [No speech] to17:05

17:05 **Barbara Beasley:** [name unclear]…the secretary is leader of the Anglicans, and under her leadership the religious life in the chapel of St. Giles has grown vigorously. Mr. Parry the chaplain comes up from the village to take Holy Communion, and an evening service on Wednesdays, and a visiting bishop sometimes takes Holy Communion on Sundays. The bus goes down to the parish church, but there's no service here on Sunday mornings. Once a fortnight on Tuesday evenings, a service is taken by a Methodist, and Friday evenings there's a rota of Anglican ch-churches in the surrounding villages. The other reason is one of the congregation [unclear to 17:47]

17:47[No speech] to 17:54

17:54 **Barbara Beasley:** The Roman Catholic congregation too, has gone from strength to strength in the past few years. Mass is usually said 3 mornings a week, and [unclear] is said every evening at quarter to 6, unless there's a visiting priest to take Benediction. 2 chapels worship side-by-side in harmony; they give spiritual comfort and peace to many who have been through torment of mind, before they have accepted their disabilities, and in the distress that is helplessness and [unclear]. They help the residents to cope with the frustration, inevitable in dependence on others, and the staff to cope with the demands made on them, physically and mentally.

18:37 [No speech] to18:41

18:41 **Barbara Beasley:** 6 years ago, when there were 5 Cheshire homes, Cheshire Smile was a duplicated house magazine. The editor died, and Frank Spath took it over. He had no experience of editing, but he had read very widely during the 22 years he'd spent in bed at home. The standard in circulation steadily improved, til it became recognised as the official publication of the Cheshire organisation. Now the circulation is about 7 thousand, and it's one of the best magazines connected with the disabled in the country. The magazine contains news of all the homes in Britain and abroad. There are now 30 British homes, and 16 in 7 other countries. To read the back runs of the magazines, is to trace the history of the social movement. When the magazines arrive from the printers, the gang gets together and packs them for postage.

19:40 [No speech] to 19:49

19:49 **Barbara Beasley:** This is Peter, chairman of the Welfare Committee.

19:52 [No speech] to 19:57

19:57 **Barbara Beasley:** Politics have a serious place in our lives. 3 members of the Welfare Committee: chairman, treasurer and 3rd member, are elected annually. The chairman is the spokesman for the residents, to the administration and management committee. This, and the duties and responsibilities of the job, make it an exhausting honour. The members also sit with 3 other elected residents on the Residents Admissions Committee, and the 3 outside friends are the Le Court Association Committee. Le Court Association publishes a monthly newsletter and runs a card club, and is starting support groups in the county.

20:38 [No speech] to 20:41

20:41 **Barbara Beasley:** Every July there's a gigantic fête on the grass in front of the house, which draws crowds from miles around. It raises between 17 hundred and 18 hundred pounds. Last year, the fête paid for redecorating the house inside and out, and the year before it paid for a new bus.

21:00 [No speech] to 21:05

21:05 **Barbara Beasley:** The bus can carry 13 or 14 people, and several folded wheelchairs. Bus outings are generally arranged by the chairman of the Welfare Committee, but if 6 or more residents want to go, and travel and maintenance engineers are busy doing something else, we can have it for private trips. If we expect to get back late, the [unclear] arrange for putting to bed, and this makes long expeditions possible. Incidentally, we can go to bed at any time if we can put ourselves to bed, or the night nurse can manage this alone. People who need 2 to put them to bed go before 11 o'clock; until then another member of the staff is on late duty.

21:47[No speech] to 21:49

21:49 **Barbara Beasley:** Occasionally, Matron drives the bus.

21:51 [No speech] to 21:55

21:55 **Barbara Beasley:** Most weeks, the bus [unclear] goes out once or twice. Naturally, a lot of the outings are local, to the pictures or plays in the nearest towns, shopping in Petersfield on a Friday morning, or to tea with friends. But we go much further afield too. Last year, the more ambitious trips included Farnborough Air Show, a concert at the Festival Hall, the Royal County's Agricultural Show, and motor racing at Goodwood.

22:24 [No speech] to 22:45

22:45 **Barbara Beasley:** Derek and Maggie have been going steady for 5 years. To get married, they'll have to leave the life they've built here. The ideal arrangement would be to have bungalows in the grounds, so that when people marry, they could still take part in the community and use its special facilities. In Spring, two bungalows are to be started, but for couples with 1 partner disabled and the other able to earn a living. There's a crying need for these houses too, because so many marriages break up under the strain if husband or wife becomes disabled. Edith and Les are a couple who didn't break up. They just had to leave home eventually, and Les comes down from Hertfordshire every weekend and stays. She was a model before their marriage and they have 2 sons. It sounds absurd that someone utterly paralysed and unable to speak like Edith can still make a contribution by her mere presence, but it is so. Last year, Peter organised a Holidays for the Disabled week, at a holiday camp at Weymouth. 20 residents went, and as many helpers, and about twice the number from outside. It was such a success that the committee have taken over the venture and hope to make it an annual event. They could have filled the 2 hundred beds in the camp 3 times over, for the week this year.

24:13 [No speech] to 24:24

24:24 **Barbara Beasley:** It's difficult to explain what gives Le Court its strangely fascinating quality, what brings people back again and again. Exuberant, thoughtful, warm-hearted, indifferent, friendly, unpredictable, ordered, chaotic, tolerant, adventurous, funny, sad, alive. Even when you're most distracted by the pressure being constantly at close quarters with such a diverse collection of human beings, only at the back of your mind, you wouldn't want to be anywhere else. Many people are convinced that the life of the disabled must be dull and empty, a burden for themselves and society. Le Court is living proof that this need not be so.

25:16 [No speech] to 25:21

25:21 Text on screen “This film was made by the disabled residents at Le Court but it would not have been possible without the help of many friends” to 25:40

**End of Transcription**