**Film Transcription

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

**Film Title:** A Man and a House **Duration:** 17minutes 48 seconds **Transcription Date:** 11th July 2016
**Archive Number**: N-607511

**Summary of Main Points**

0:13 Introduction by Prince Philip

0:56 Eamonn Andrews introduces the history of Le Court

2:37 Eamonn Andrews describes the evolution of the building and the eventual construction of a new one.

5:11 Eamonn Andrews discusses the facilities of the new building

6:57 Eamonn Andrews explains the jobs done through the week by the residents

7:26 Eamonn Andrews tells us of the lives of specific residents, including their disability and what they do.

11:09 Eamonn Andrews discusses the technology, with reference to specific residents, which helps to improve the lives of the disabled.

14:35 Eamonn Andrews discusses the staff of Le Court, including volunteers.

15:59 Eamonn Andrews discusses residents leaving Le Court for trips.

16:57 Prince Phillip concludes the video with a brief analysis of disability in regards to the greater public.

**Start of Transcription

0:07** ["A MAN AND A HOUSE" text displayed on screen] **0:13** [Introduced by His Royal Highness Prince Phillip text displayed on screen] **0:21 Prince Philip**: Those of us who have been fortunate enough to live active lives and take part in energetic sports and recreations, hardly ever stop to think about the disabled who are forced to lead inactive lives. The film you are going to see, tells the story of an attempt to open a new life for people who are disabled and unlikely to get better.

0:48 [No speech] to 0:54

0:56 **Eamonn Andrews [Narrator]**: Le Court was a pleasant, country house in Hampshire near Liss. Today it has been completely rebuilt and is one of over 100 Cheshire homes for the disabled spread over the world from Europe and Africa, to Asia and the Americas. How did this happen?

1:16 [No speech] to 1:21

1:22 **Eamonn Andrews**: After the war it was bought by Group Captain Leonard Cheshire for a community scheme for ex-servicemen which failed. He was about to sell it when he heard that one of the ex-members of the settlement, Arthur Dykes, an ex-serviceman of two World Wars, was in hospital dying of cancer. But the hospital was short of beds and could not keep him. Being unable to get him in anywhere else, Cheshire took him in to Le Court and nursed him 'till he died.

1:52 [No speech] to 1:58

1:58 **Eamonn Andrews**: Unexpectedly, Arthur was followed by others and gradually the house filled up with the sick and disabled who had nowhere to go. Within less than a year there were 24 residents of differing ages and disabilities with very little income, except for what could be sold from the garden, no paid staff. And, not even electricity. Conditions were hardly ideal.

This meant that everyone had to help with the daily chores, even those that were flat on their backs.

2:32 [No speech] to 2:37

2:37 **Eamonn Andrews**: It led to a feeling of belonging to a family, to an awareness that whether disabled or not, everybody was needed and had their own very real contribution to make. As the home grew and the number of voluntary helpers increased, inevitably the pattern began to change.

A trained nurse was engaged, a management committee formed and priority given to the younger disabled. But the sense of personal involvement remained.

In summer 1949, the first garden fete was organised to raise money for the repairs and modernisation that the old building so badly needed.

Then a crack developed in the walls which spread so rapidly that the safety of the whole building was threatened. … Le Court had asked the Carnegie Trust for the gift of a van. But when they saw the danger the house was in Carnegie offered instead to pay for an entirely new building. At that time no such building existed in the country, and it was to the residents themselves that the architects turned for advice. The foundation stone was laid by Lord Tedder in 1953. And in 1955, the home was opened by the Queen Mother and the residents began to move in. At first, they didn't like the move. The old house had become their home and they looked on the new building as...as an institution. But it wasn't long before they realised how much better the new one was. Few of the residents of the old Le Court are still alive today but Miss Trow is one of them. She remembers with nostalgia the old pioneering days with their warmth and companionship. Joe Pinchcombe is another of the original residents, he admits that the present home is really far more comfortable and suitable. In the original house, the residents were crowded together with many of them now realising an ambition that burns in the mind of those who live in institutions.

5:11 **Eamonn Andrews**: A room of their own. Many of the residents have spent years in hospital wards. And we who have our own homes and rooms, can hardly realise what it means to be able to have our own things around us. To choose our own colours...to have the opportunity of just sitting and talking to someone, in privacy. Most of the residents take their meals in the communal dining room...and this is also the place where everyone meets...although there are televisions, lounges and other communal rooms. Le Court also has amenities such as the hair dressing salon and the shop, where most of the everyday requirements are sold. But if this description has given you the idea that Le Court is just a specially equipped hotel, let me disillusion you. For during the week it is full of purposeful activity. The residents workshop is always busy. Others work in their own rooms, each doing what suits them best, at their own pace. And in their own way. Joy can't use her hands so she has developed an amazing dexterity with her feet and makes baskets like a professional.

6:57 **Eamonn Andrews**: [The film has transitioned to images of a workshop] This is the metal workshop where many of the gadgets that make life easier for the residents are conceived and made. Neville, the resident photographer is often to be found in his darkroom where he not only processes and prints his films, but ranges the world on his short-wave, ham radio.

7:19 [No speech] to 7:26

7:26 **Eamonn Andrews**: David Jeffries is a skilled watchmaker and plies his trade in the quieter atmosphere of his own room. All the products of their industry are for sale. As with other Cheshire homes, the residents themselves have their own committee to deal with many aspects of their lives. The fundraising committee operates from an office in one of the bedrooms and with the help of one or two outside volunteers and their own energy and determination, brings in a considerable amount of money each year. There is a warden of Le Court who, together with the matron, is responsible for the administration of the home. As in the early days they work hand in hand with the residents: a team, together. Now let me introduce you to some of today's residents whose home, Le Court, has become.

8:30 **Eamonn Andrews**: [Film transitions to an image of a woman] Barbara Beesley, who handles publicity. Despite being severely handicapped by a spinal injury, she manages to control an electric chair with a pronounced veer to [Narrator laughs lightly] starboard and she has the drive to get things done. If she can't do it herself, she soon finds someone who can and sees to it that they do.

8:55 [Film transitions from image of Barbara to an image of a man] Major David Martin who was severely wounded in Malaya, previously chairman of the welfare committee, he's now on the fete committee and in charge of the tape library of the foundation.

[9:07 Film transitions from image of David to image of another man] Alec Ramsay was in the parachute regiment until one drop landed him in St Mary's Hospital, Portsmouth. For eleven years he has been kept alive by a respirator, he met Lucy when she came to work at Le Court and they're now engaged.

[9:22 Film transitions from image of Alec to image of another man] Nipper is another resident from the early days in spite of a severe disability...a bit of a wag.

9:30 No speech to 9:37

9:37 **Eamonn Andrews**: [Film transitions to image of another man] Nigel is a comparative newcomer to Le Court and was a journalist until disabled. He still has a journalist interest in other people. He also has a reputation as a mimic and can put on a goon show single-handed.

9:57 [Film transitions to image of another man] Dennis Gardener became spastic later in life, he has his own electric chair and despite severe speech difficulties, which makes some communication with others very difficult for them, early this year he went on a tour of the United States, genuine whistle-stop stuff. He enjoyed it but admits that it was, very tiring.

10:19 [Film transitions to image of another man] Bob Simmons, was a welder until after deteriorating health he slipped and broke his neck. He propels himself around in his electric flying bedstead flat on his back. And wears prismatic spectacles so that he can look forward instead of at the ceiling all the time. He collected a record 52 pounds at the flag day at Portsmouth.

10:47 [Film transitions to image of a woman] Jeanette Cochrane, disabled by polio twelve years ago and confined to hospital for most of that time. She was formerly a short-hand typist. And with an electric typewriter, and various other devices, helps with correspondents and indeed, to the still sure a good turn of speed.

11:09 **Eamonn Andrews**: [Film transitions back to the building] Le Court, which has already built two new extensions and is now building another, houses many such life stories. For whom it seeks to provide a home that they can really call their own, and where each may lead as normal and purposeful a life as possible. For most of us it's difficult to imagine the endless frustration caused by severe disability, particularly when it comes to communication and moving about.

Fortunately, technology is providing more and more aids to independence and mobility. [Film transitions through images of various aids] From the normal invalid car used by David Jeffrey, to the individually designed and made electric chairs, such as Jim Crawford's which is controlled by blowing into a mouth piece. Each chair is made to suit the disability of the owner, like the sunny reclining chair of Frank Spath, affectionately known as 'the tank', for which he edits a magazine for the disabled. The controls vary from the tram drivers handle of Dennis' chair, the pilots joystick type, the cockpit of Frank Spath’s 'tank', which is as much an office as a wheelchair, and the computer aid controls used by Andrew Lewis. The lifts at Le Court are of course designed for use by the disabled, and the public telephone booth holds an array of gadgetry which enables even the severely handicapped to use the telephone without help. Heath Robertson had nothing on the devices which in one way or another, make life happier for the residents.

12:58 **Eamonn Andrews** [Film transitions to images of typewriters]: For communication, electric typewriters are a boon whether used by hands or feet. And for those who are unable to use either, there is the electric typewriter which is worked by blowing or sucking on a mouth piece. It is slow but it is, communication. Perhaps the most sophisticated of these devices is the typewriter of which the keyboard is displayed in front of the typist. This is connected by a cable to a special electric typewriter which can be placed in any convenient position. A light is strapped to the head of the typist and the machine functions when the beam hits a cell below the indicated letter. Jim's Possum enables him by sucking or blowing into a mouth piece to turn or off the radio, or the heating, or the lights as well as the other functions shown on the display panel in any permutation or combination. These are more than interesting gadgets to the residents of Le Court: they are God-sends. Just imagine what they mean to lives where hands must be replaced by feet, or the mouth, where wheels have to take the place of legs, where muscles are motors, where even lungs are replaced by pumps and where forgetting to charge your batteries at night, immobilises you for the whole of the next day.

14:35 **Eamonn Andrews**: [Film transition to images of care workers at Le Court] And in spite of all these devices the disabled are very dependent on others. And at Le Court, as in most Cheshire homes, there are almost as many staff as residents: nurses, cooks, orderlies, cleaners and so on.

Caring for the long-term disabled calls for a special person, someone who can combine professionalism and efficiency, who has a real and human understanding of disability and its consequences. It calls too for a well knit and varied team, a permanent staff who bring security and confidence. And the volunteers...uhh...'slaves’ as they're called, who bring to the home new vigour and the freshness of youth. These volunteers come from many places, soldiers and sailors who give up their leave or their off time, the university students and school boys from abroad as well as at home who spend part of their holidays not as a duty, but because they enjoy it.

Out of this interaction of so many different personalities, there grows and flowers that zest for life which is so much the hallmark of the disabled.

15:59 **Eamonn Andrews**: [Film transitions to images of disabled residents outside of the home] But however many may come to work or just to visit, and however full of life the home may offer, almost every resident feels the need to get away from time to time. To go for a drive, to spend an afternoon in an ordinary household, to watch a football match, or whatever it might be. The mere fact that one has become disabled, however severely, doesn't make one different from other people, not inwardly in one's hopes and desires. It is this probably, more than anything else, that the disabled would like the world to understand.

In the foreword to '*New Lives for Old'*, a book on the Cheshire homes, his Royal Highness Prince Phillip, has this to say:

16:57 **Prince Phillip**: People are never likely to know a problem, or appreciate its importance, unless it affects them personally. The problem of the incurably sick tends to be hidden from the public view and so to many people it doesn't exist. In this story are displayed all the difficulties which the disabled have to face, as they share the gift of life with their more fortunate neighbours.

17:31 [No Speech] to 17:46  [Narration by Eamonn Andrews appears on screen]

**End of Transcription**