**Audio Transcription**

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

**Title:** St Cecilia's - Speeches at the laying of the Foundation Stone 1957

**Duration:** 28.44

**Location:** St. Cecilia's Cheshire Home

**Date of Original Recording:** 1957

**Transcription Date:** 30th July 2016

**Summary of Main Points**

1.56 - Mr Worthington thanks attendees and discusses the foundation’s plans for expansion.  
15.07 - Lady Denning delivers messages from Lord Denning and invites Lady Dorothy Macmillan to lay the foundation stone.

20.03 - Lady Dorothy Macmillan lays the foundation stone and shares her thanks.

22.38 - G.C. Leonard Cheshire makes his thanks and closes proceedings.

26.44 - Mr Worthington invites attendees to have tea.

**Start of Transcription**

[birdsong 0:39 to 1:00]

[music 1:01 to 1:55 ]

1:56 **Mr Worthington:** Lady Dorothy Macmillan, my Lords and Ladies, your Worships, Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen... I think that it was quite soon after the Group Captain founded this home, 3 years ago that he and many of us began to think about expanding. We did realise that there was a lot that we could do but naturally, having started very much as Leonard himself has often said, on a shoestring, there was a great deal of consolidation before we could carry out our plans of expansion... but last year we felt that the time was right to start something, errr, and to expand. And so we set about the task of trying to... see what we could do to achieve this. We had, by our side, Mr Drewitt, our architect, who's very experienced in the quest of building homes and we got the advice of a number of... people who also knew a great deal about these things but, um, as Mr Drewitt can tell you he produced many plans before the one which we're starting on today and the one which we feel, er, is... will meet the bill. Er, we think that this plan is going to produce a very comfortable, homely place for our present patients and the staff and of course when the plan is completed, we're going to be able to help another 10 people who, not so fortunate as ourselves, need care and attention, care and attention they'll get here, which they're not getting at the moment. As you know... or some of you know...  this home was founded 3 years ago. It followed Le Court and St. Teresa's, the first 2 homes and they, like all the other Cheshire homes, I think, started very much as we did, they had, a very great number of initial problems, but hard work managed to solve these and once they'd got on their way they... they decided, like we're deciding now, to expand. Those 2 homes, they started before us, they are fully developed now, they're beautiful brand new buildings, beautifully equipped to meet the needs of the patients whom they're caring for and today is our turn to start, and I think, for that reason alone, it's a most important day in our short history. But it's a very important and special day for a number of other very good reasons. The first of course, is the very great honor, that Lady Dorothy Macmillan has bestowed upon us by coming here this afternoon. We welcome her, we know of course, that it is not the first time that she has visited St. Cecilia's. We are also very glad to have with us a number of new friends... we hope that some of these new friends, having been here, will be able to come back on other occasions and visit us. We welcome particularly, the Mayor of Bexley and the Chairman of the urban district councils of Crayford and Orpington. I think that their visit here this afternoon all goes very well for some of our plans. Hampshire and Cornwall and Leicestershire, have their own Cheshire homes and in each of these counties, they have been...dedopt... adopted not only by the local people but by the whole of the county and each of those counties recognise, with a great deal of pride, their own particular Cheshire homes. We hope and it's the hope of our management committee, that in time... the people of this county will be proud to look upon St. Cecilia's as their particular home and we'll be willing to help in every way in this development. I hope that perhaps some of our new friends here this afternoon... will having seen us, feel that perhaps they may be able to go back to their own districts and help wherever they can in the development of our friends in their particular areas.

And then it's a very special day because we are glad to welcome not only many of the representatives from our other Cheshire homes but also we are very proud to have with us, as always, Group Captain Leonard Cheshire himself. I'm afraid his visits are all too rare but we understand because we know that his absence is only because he's abroad or in other parts of England, founding new homes and helping many, many more people. We are very glad too, to have with us Professor and Mrs Cheshire, I hope that what is being done here today and the achievements we may have in the future will add to what must be, their overwhelming pride in what Leonard Cheshire is doing among the chronic sick. We're also of course, very glad to welcome a number of our other trustees, Mr Russell, the treasurer, Miss Morris and last but not least, Miss Mason, the secretary, who does so much to help us. And then again, today, I think, is a very special day because we, it's one of the rare occasions when we can have so many of our own local friends here with us. Unfortunately, err, a great number of them, even so, can't be with us because they're working but it surely, it is significant to know that the majority of people that do help this home are people who have their own work to do, their own lives to live, and yet, they're still prepared to devote quite a lot of their very limited spare time to helping people who are perhaps not so well off as themselves. When the Group Captain started this home 3 years ago, I think perhaps, some of us had slight doubts as to whether he wasn't biting off more than he could chew. Well.. we haven't got any doubts now at all but I think our doubts might be excusable because we didn't fully understand, errr, the significance of what he was doing. We didn't understand the courage and the tremendous inspiration and simple faith that lay behind what he was doing. We didn't understand that our local people here, once they knew what he was doing, once they knew that... it was an urgent work that he was doing and that people who are sick can't just wait indefinitely for the frills to be sorted out, I don't think we realised that we would get from these people the support that we have. Neither, I'm sure, did we realise that we would get the support in such tremendous... style. I suppose we've had thousands of people coming to this home over the past 3 years, helping, and that's no exaggeration. We don't know, I'm sorry to say, more than a fraction of them, but not only have we had the individual helpers, we've had magnificent support from the local churches of all denominations. They have helped us, not only spiritually but in many kind gifts and as well as the churches, we've had wonderful support from many of the local authorities and also from many of the local associations who've gone out of their way to raise money by fetes and to help in every way they can. And then of course, lastly but by no means least, the press. They've been our friends right from the beginning and they've helped in a tremendous... way. I think that all these people that have helped this home, today should be recognised as their day, because, I'm quite certain that without their help, what has been achieved here, would never have been achieved. And I hope that in recognising the fact that we do depend on them, that they will continue to support us, that they will give us the help that we shall need in the very big tasks, financial and otherwise, which we're going to have to meet, errr, in the future and I hope, and I'm sure that we will have their loyal support and that when, as things, sometimes do, even in the best regulated families, go wrong, that they will help us to solve these by keeping them in true perspective. Well now, I suppose that every day such as this has its disappointments and we have ours. We very much regret that... Sir Archibald and Lady Jamieson were abroad and can't be with us. Sir Archibald has been a magnificent friend to this home right from the outset and it's taken me a long time to tell you of all the kind things he's done to help us. I'm sorry too that... only because we don't know his name and we've never known his name... we haven't been able to invite our very wonderful benefactor, who 5 years ago, errr.. a year ago gave us 5,000 pounds, he knew that we had hopes and plans sometime in the future to extend and this was his way of encouraging us to get on. I don't think that today would be... errrr.... finished and I don't think it would be completed without our remembering these 2 very kind friends and even though in their absence, saying to them again, thank you very much for all they have done to.. for us.

Well... I have now a very great pleasure and duty to perform. We had hoped that Lord Denning, Chairman of the Foundation, would be able to be here to talk to us. During the last year, whilst Leonard Cheshire has been out of the country, and we've had many problems to face and many difficult decisions to make, we've had to turn to the trust and particularly, to Lord Denning. He's been very kind to us and has given us tremendous inspiration. He's never been too busy to see us and discuss our problems with us and he's always been a very kind and wise guide. Unhappily, he can't be here today, very unfortunate for us but he's been very kind in persuading Lady Denning to come along and take his place. Lady Denning has of course, her own family ties in Bromley and her sister... errr... is a regular visitor to this home and I know one who all our visitors and staff are always very glad to see. It does therefore, give me very great pleasure, and it's a great honor to ask Lady Denning if she would be so good now to say a few words to us before Lady Dorothy Macmillan lays our foundation stone.

[applause 14:59 to 15:05]

15:07**Lady Denning:** Lady Dorothy, Ladies and Gentlemen, my mission this afternoon is a very simple one, it is just to bring you 1 or 2 messages from my husband, who as you know is Chairman of the trustees of the Cheshire Foundation. He was very disappointed not to be here this afternoon, errr.. we'd both hoped, even to the latest hour that he would be but unfortunately, he's sitting on case which hasn't finished. Errr... if his thoughts are in the right place this afternoon, they should be as far away as the island of Fiji [laughter]but I somehow feel, that they will be wandering into Bromley now and then.. errr.. perhaps if one pauses to think, it isn't so strange to link up Bromley with Fiji in ones thoughts because the homes... the Cheshire Foundation homes now, are gradually stretching around the world. There are several homes operating in India and I believe Singapore is the next one to be opened. I hope I'm right in this I'm sure Group Captain Cheshire will put us right later. Well.. if... if at Singapore, why not the next foundation stone in Fiji? But to get back to my messages, I have 2 special messages, first of all, to all the friends of St. Cecilia's who have made this day possible, especially perhaps to Mr Worthington and his committee who have worked so terribly hard and tackled all the problems that have come up day by day as one knows, problems do in these great ventures. My husband has asked me to express his great admiration for all that is being done here and to give you his very warm congratulations. He feels that somehow it is an example of the spirit that seems to enter into everyone who works for the Cheshire Foundation. It's an inspiration that comes to them to work and all difficulties are overcome. His other message is particularly to Lady Dorothy, to thank her for giving up her time to come here this afternoon. Her visit is a great honour to St. Cecilia's and to Bromley but the honour doesn't end in this area only... errr... I think the best way of describing it is like throwing a pebble into a p..pool, the pebble falls on a very small spot but the waves go out to the very edges of the water and so it is through the Foundation the honour that Lady Dorothy is paying us today here, is felt in every Cheshire home throughout the world. I do thank you for listening to me so patiently, I do thank Mr Worthington for all the nice things he has said, I will pass them on to my husband when I get home and I now have great pleasure in asking Lady Dorothy to lay the foundation stone of the new building.

[applause 18:35 to 18:43]

[unclear 18:44 to 19:37]

[applause 19:38 to 19:47]

20:03**Lady Dorothy Macmillan:** [clears throat] Mr Mayor, your Worships, Ladies and Gentlemen, I'm delighted to have been given the opportunity to come to... St. Cecilia's again and I am much honoured to have been asked to lay the foundation stone of this extension to the home. We all know the wonderful work, we've been hearing quite a lot about it, that is done by the Cheshire Homes and it is a great tribute to Group Captain Cheshire and those connected with this particular home that it has been possible to start the building of this extension. There is a desperate need for the beds that it will provide but, a lot of money is also still wanted. This great work must not be allowed to suffer. This is a Kentish home and I am sure that if only they know about the work and understand what is being done here, that there are enough Kentish men and women of goodwill who will help raise the money. Group Captain Cheshire is an inspiration to us all, and one sees over and over again how the people, who have unbounded faith in the work they have set themselves to do, so somehow seem to manage to get the money to achieve their purpose. Let us all inspire our friends in all parts of the county with the same enthusiasm and so make sure that this wonderful home which is much needed can be used to its fullest capacity. I'd like to thank you all for your very kind welcome... to me... it's been a real pleasure to come this afternoon and I only hope that the stone is well and truly laid and will not collapse or anything like that [laughter]. I know this home will be of inestimable benefit and we hope that it will... errr... soon be able to house the extra number of patients. Thank you all very much.

[applause 22:11 to 22:32]

[no speech 22:32 to 22:37]

22:38**Leonard Cheshire:** Errr... Lady Dorothy, Ladies and Gentlemen, well, it's my very great pleasure... errr... to end the proceedings by  word of thanks on behalf of everyone to Lady Dorothy for having laid the stone which is beautifully engraved and as Lady Dorothy has said, hasn't made the foundations collapse, to the great relief of our architect who's sitting in the background. It certainly, a very happy occasion for us, with people from all over the different homes and from Bromley, and here on the left, you've probably noticed, is a little section all on its own with the patients and sitting here, they look as good as gold but it doesn't need me to tell you that they don't always look as good as gold and I think they're only waiting for the formalities to cease to break into life. That's right, Andy, isn't it? Well, we have representatives from the different homes here today, and... they too, feel very privileged at having had Lady Dorothy to perform this ceremony.  Lady Dorothy is very well known to all of you here in Bromley. I know something about Lady Dorothy, that perhaps, you don't. Now, most people, when they occupy as high a position in the country as Lady Dorothy does, travel about in a good deal of comfort, surrounded by all sorts of help and protection and so on but I know that Lady Dorothy is often to be seen walking through the crowds on Waterloo station carrying her own bag, which I think has a handle loose, like mine [laughter] ... and finding her own way onto the train so I know that nobody is more welcome here today than Lady Dorothy. This is a home for people who perhaps, haven't got other homes to go to, it's a Bromley home and she symbolises more than anyone else, Bromley. So I do thank her on behalf of everyone here, very much indeed for the honour she's done us.

[applause 25:16 to 25:20]

25:21 The... errr... work on the building has started but only just started in time... but anyway, it's started. It's quite a big building which is going to cost 18,000 pounds, which means that if we don't do it quick enough it may cost 36, is that right? [laughter] ... and I don't think we have quite all the money, I don't know if that's unique or not in the homes... and so it's going to be built by stages. Nobody is going to think of asking for money today but errr... the day will come when money will have to be found for the last stage. But the first 2 stages has the money for it and it will be finished... well we hope by the end of the year... Bob? and will have its patients in and also release rooms for the staff that we don't have. So there, our formal ceremony comes to an end, we have the chance of meeting each other... and... has that... tent got some tea in it?[unclear 26:27 to 26:28]So thank you very much indeed for having come and I hope that it will be a happy and a pleasant afternoon. Thank you very much.

[applause 26:37 to 26:43]

26:44 **Mr Worthington:** As the Group Captain said we'd very much like you to all stay for tea, if you'd kindly leave your seats now we can have them rearranged. The tea will be served in the tent which is behind. Thank you.

[no speech 26:59 to 28:44]

**End of Transcription**