**Audio Transcription**

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

**Title:** Le Court Foundation Stone -1953

**Duration:** 6 minutes 41 seconds

**Location:** Le Court Cheshire Home, Hampshire

**Date of Original Recording:** 1953

**Transcription Date:** 2017

**Start of transcription**

00:00:08 **[Leonard Cheshire]:** All I want to do in these few moments is to send everybody here present at Le Court on this memorable occasion my very best wishes and above all to extend a very warm and heartfelt welcome to our guests of honour, Marshall of the Royal Air Force, Lord Tedder, who has given up his afternoon to come here and lay our foundation stone.

00:35  Laying a foundation stone is, it's humble way, to the life of a building, what the coronation is the life of The Queen. It is its solemn official dedication to its appointed task. Perhaps we may take it as a happy omen that our small ceremony is taking place in the month that we will, that will be remembered throughout British history as that in which our Queen was crowned.

01:12 Perhaps also we may take it as a happy omen that whereas at the start of the old Le Court, the two principal actors, the first patient and the first nurse, were both RAF, so  today at the start of the new Le Court the principal actor is also RAF, perhaps the most distinguished of all RAF officers.

01:43 Today, with the many distinguished people whom we have present, puts me in mind of a very different day five years ago, almost exactly. When Le Court was an almost deserted house in which were lying two dying people. I was standing out on the lawns just in front of this stand, hacking away at the long grass with a scythe, when I saw coming towards me the figure of a young girl. She stopped about twenty yards away, announced that she was a WREN who'd been stationed at Le Court during the war, when it was a naval hospital, asked me one or two questions about what was happening, had a look round at the derelict garden and finally announced, before turning on her heel and walking away, that Le Court was finished.

02:53 Well, the conclusion she came to wasn't really an unreasonable one, most certainly one which was commonly held in the neighbouring district. The estate was heavily mortgaged and in debt, there was no money at all in the bank, we had no equipment whatsoever in the house, and worst of all, I don't suppose there was anyone in the whole of England who knew less about organising a nursing home than I did.

03:26 Yet, what was impossible to me, was not impossible with God, who very often uses the most unlikely agents to bring his designs to pass, so that there will be no doubt as to where the credit lies.

03:51 And today, from those humble beginnings, we have arrived at this memorable occasion. And of the many favours and kindnesses which God has shown me, not least, is the steadily growing stream of helpers and well-wishers from almost every corner of the world, and certainly from every walk of life, who have come to our rescue and kept us going.

04:25 And today, when the foundations of the new Le Court are being laid so to speak, on the ruins of the old, when the first stage, the battle against odds and against adversity is giving way to the second stage, when we hope to construct the future on a secure foundation of peace and prosperity.

05:03 It is to this stream of helpers and well-wishers that my thoughts turn. To me, the foundation stone, that is being laid, and our guest of honour who is laying it, symbolise these many helpers without whom Le Court would never have survived. On behalf of myself and of all the patients at Le Court, past and present, I extend my most sincere gratitude to the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, and to all those many helpers, rich and poor, who have made this day possible. To Lord and Lady Tedder, I extend our warmest welcome, and also our gratitude for having given up their day, and to all of you present, my best wishes and my hopes that it will be a happy and pleasant day for everyone, as well as a successful day for those who have organised and been responsible for the ceremony and the fete.

**End of transcription**