

## **LUDWIG GUTTMANN, FATHER OF THE PARALYMPIC GAMES**

In summer 2012, the London International Paralympic Games will see 4,200 athletes from over 150 countries compete in 20 sports to packed crowds. It is not widely known that the Paralympics originated with an Archery contest in 1948, organised by neurologist Ludwig Guttmann, a Jewish refugee from Nazi Germany.

Having bravely saved over 60 people during the pogrom of Kristallnacht in November 1938, in March 1939 Guttmann arrived in Oxford with his family. In February 1944 he became the founder and head of a new Spinal Injuries Unit at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, Buckinghamshire, catering for disabled World War II servicemen.

Guttmann implemented a rehabilitation and treatment programme that was revolutionary for its time. He believed that with improved treatment, restored hope and training, his patients could once more become active and employable citizens. Individual and team sports were widely utilized towards this aim.

On 28 July 1948, the opening day of the London Olympics, Guttmann hosted an Archery contest at Stoke Mandeville. The two competing teams comprised 16 disabled athletes, former servicemen and women. Named the Stoke Mandeville Games, it was to be the precursor to the Paralympic Games.

In 1952, with the inclusion of Dutch ex-servicemen, the annual Stoke Mandeville Games became International. In Rome, in 1960, the Games were staged for the first time together with the Olympics, becoming the first Paralympic Games.

Guttmann continued his work becoming an international authority on spinal cord injuries. He received widespread honours and in 1966 was knighted by Queen Elizabeth II. Sir Ludwig Guttmann died in 1980. We celebrate his legacy with this display in the ground floor galleries.



**Guttman with Prof Otfried Foerster and hospital staff  
at the Wenzel-Hancke Hospital, Breslau, Germany, 1920s**

Wellcome Library, London

In February 1933, following the Nazi seizure of government, Guttman was forced to leave the Wenzel-Hancke Hospital and move to the Breslau Jewish Hospital. This was the beginning of a ten-year break in his career. The growing anti-Jewish legislation and persecution throughout the 1930s gradually made work and life in Germany gradually unbearable.

During the pogrom of Kristallnacht in November 1938, dozens of injured Jews found refuge in the Jewish Hospital. When the SS came to arrest them they were confronted by Guttman, who claimed these were regular patients and provided false case histories for them all. The SS were taken in by this trick and Guttman saved more than 60 people from being arrested and interned in concentration camps.

Shortly afterwards, Guttman was offered a research position in Oxford, and a grant from the British Society for the Protection of Science and Learning (now CARA). The Society organised a visa for him and his family, and in March 1939 they arrived in Oxford.

**“Making New Men”, *Picture Post*, 3 September 1949**

A six-page photo essay on Stoke Mandeville’s Spinal Injuries Unit, and Guttman’s treatment and rehabilitation methods. Included is the story of the Hospital’s first patient, Harry Collier, injured in Italy in 1944 and by then fully rehabilitated.

National Spinal Injuries Centre, Stoke Mandeville Hospital

***The Cord: International Journal for the Paraplegics*, Vol. 15, no. 3, summer 1963**

The journal was started in 1947 by Guttman’s patients in Stoke Mandeville.

National Spinal Injuries Centre, Stoke Mandeville Hospital

**Guttman’s scrapbook, and pages relating to his visits to Austria and West Germany, 1974**

Left: reportage on Guttman’s visit to a new rehabilitation centre in Bad Haering, Austria. *Tiroler Tageszeitung*, 16 April 1974.

Right: Guttman by the newly launched sign of the street named after him in Heidelberg, West Germany, 1974.

In the reportage, Guttman is described as ‘the famous... Englishman from Germany’ and ‘The Angel of the Paraplegics’. He was honoured worldwide, and streets were named after him in other towns in Germany (Ludwigshaffen), Holland and other countries.

Dr Dennis Guttman, Peterborough

**Memorabilia brought by Guttman from the Second Paralympic Games in Tokyo, 1964**

As *Paralympics* became the official term for the international games for disabled athletes only in 1988, the Tokyo Games were called, at the time, The Thirteen International Stoke Mandeville Games.

It was the second time, after being staged in Rome in 1960, that the Games were held at the same time and place as the Olympics. 375 athletes, 307 men and 68 women, from 21 countries participated in the Tokyo Games.

The four photographs are from the closing ceremony. One of them features Guttman with the Games’ patrons, Japanese Crown Prince Akihito and Princess Michiko.

National Spinal Injuries Centre, Stoke Mandeville Hospital