

**Margaret Maughan: film interview at Stoke Mandeville Stadium
with Jon Newman, 10 August, 2012**

When did you first come to Stoke Mandeville and why?

In 1958 I thought I would quite like to settle for a few years and I went to Malawi which was then called Nyasaland and had a teaching job and everything was going very nicely. And then I unfortunately had a car accident in 1959 and was in hospital there for a short time. Then they said we shall have to send you back to England. I knew there was something not right because I obviously couldn't move. Anyway, so I was flown back to England to this strange hospital that I had never heard of called Stoke Mandeville, arrived there in I think it was April. I soon realised that it was not a normal hospital, not the sort one would expect a hospital to be. I hadn't at that stage heard the name Ludwig Guttmann, but I soon found out who he was because this little man appeared one day at my bedside and it was obvious that he was fairly important because it was quiet all around and nobody spoke. I think I was having a bit of a cry to myself, because it was very uncomfortable (we had to have horrible sandbags down our backs to try and keep our spines straight) and he popped up there and wanted to know what was wrong and so on and I said it was very painful and then he said that I had to concentrate on what was good and not think about the worst and be positive and not waste time thinking about what wasn't positive. And that was my motto, I think, all through life after that.

Tell me about the role that Physiotherapy played

In the beginning in those days we had a lot of bed rest; nowadays they are up in no time at all. I was in bed for a couple of months and our Physio was very important; we had lots of what they call "passive movement" as we lay in bed, arm strengthening movements just to keep us as fit as possible. We also had to do Occupational Therapy and I remember vividly the lady occupational therapist who used to come onto the ward every afternoon with cane, yards of cane, and she soaked it in the bath and we all had to get busy making trays and baskets – and I know that I made Christmas presents for everybody in the family that year. So yes, we were very active even as we lay in bed. And then

of course the busiest time was when we had to start getting used to sitting in the wheel chair. At least Twice a day we had Physio, very important and our physiotherapists became great friends in fact - and even now we come across different ones often and we meet up. And also we did lots of other things. The regular programme was to get up in the morning and sit at the tables down the middle of the ward ready and dressed for breakfast. I would go to swimming first to the little rehab pool, then after that you would go to woodwork, then to physiotherapy then more physiotherapy in the afternoon and then always a sport of some kind. And that was when I was first introduced to archery. I liked it, lots of people think it's boring, but I did enjoy it and I suppose I was quite good at it. We used to have these little competitions amongst the patients and I used to win And then they had boards around the archery room and my name used to appear up there and I was quite proud of it. And so it went on and we used to have to look after ourselves as far as possible.

Who was encouraging you to take up sport?

I suppose it was coming from Guttman. But it was just a thing we did, a thing we had to do, it was in our programme – and I suppose some people hated it - but we all had to have a go at something. I tried table tennis but I wasn't ever any good at that. I wasn't good at swimming either, but I did that because it was very good [for you] and we used to have physiotherapy in the swimming pool as well. But archery was the one that I really enjoyed.

When did the sport become competitive?

I didn't know anything really about the games apart from the fact that in the summer I had gone out with one of the nurses that helped me and she had taken me out round to the back of the hospital where these foreign people as well as British people were doing a wheel past. They were having what was in fact called in those days the Stoke Mandeville International Games. I found out they were held every year in August. It didn't really register at the time, but I went home Christmas 1959 armed with my set of arrows and a bow and all my baskets that I had made and I thought right, I would look around for an archery club. We lived in this small village between Preston and Southport and there was an archery club in Preston. So my dad used to drive me once a week to this little club and they were very kind to me; they helped because they had to

string the bow for me and help me with the arrows; and this was what I was doing. In fact my father was a market gardener and we had land at the back and he got a big bale of straw and I had a target and I used to do a bit of practising on this straw bale. Then I was invited to come back to Stoke Mandeville to what they called the National Stoke Mandeville Games and I did quite well there and won this [round] - it wasn't the top archery class but it was a middle round called the Columbia Round and I think we shot 60 yards the furthest. And I took part in all these things because in those days we used to have a go at everything, used to do field events and swimming and so on. So I went home and a few weeks later to my surprise I got this letter saying you've been invited to be in the team, selected actually, to be in the team to go to Rome in August and well this was of course very exciting, So I agreed I would like to do it and go. At the appropriate time we all had to assemble at Stoke Mandeville in the hospital, because this stadium where we are today wasn't at that stage built. So we were given a green tracksuit and a blazer and we had a Panama hat as well and we were all given a medical exam; and then the next day we were all off to the airport. We had to be lifted; because there were 70 people in the team we all had to be lifted into the coaches, our wheelchairs folded and cushions stowed and this took time - we had some marvellous escorts and they worked very hard - and off we went to the airport where the same thing happened: out of the coaches, all lifted again, wheelchairs found. And there was the plane and we were taken onto the runway and again we had to get four at a time into this wire cage onto a fork lift truck up to the door of the plane and again lifted in, put in the seats and off we went to Rome and we arrived at the airport and were loaded into coaches and set off to the Olympic village which is where we were staying. And you can imagine as we arrived there and drove into the village, all the accommodation was on stilts, up flights of stairs and it turned out that the accommodation that had been selected for us was for some unknown reason taken away by the Italian Olympic Committee and we were given these rooms up two flights of stairs, But the Italian Army came up trumps because at every flight of stairs they had two soldiers on duty, or other escorts as well, and they were there all day and to well into the night, because there was lots of merriment going on at night in the club on the Olympic site. And there we were.

Tell me about winning your medal.

I happened to be in this Columbia Round archery which was the first of the archery events; so I think it was the first event of the first day. We went off and we all sat, the ladies and the men, all together in one long line and there was an escort for each target and we shot our six arrows and it seemed like these hundreds of little people seemed to rush to the targets and they wrote down our scores, and they knew because each arrow had a different coloured fletching and they brought back the arrows. But they didn't actually tell us what our scores were, but I did vaguely know that I was doing quite well. Anyway we got to the end of the competition and again we got our arrows back and we didn't get our score, so I had no idea what [it] was; and later on I realised you had to have a score card of your own and put your scores down and I hadn't done it. So I just went off then and joined my other friends and went to support everyone else, because we supported each other in the different events. And the day went on and we were put on the coaches to go home and somebody said "Where's Margaret Maughan? She's needed for a medal ceremony." So they had to find my wheelchair amongst all the others, lift me out, and off we went to a very nice little podium with ramps to get up to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd places and to my amazement I was in the gold medal position. No, no one had told me until that point! And they were playing the National Anthem, God Save the Queen and an important Italian official presented me with my medal; and I didn't know at that stage, but it turned out that was the first medal that Great Britain had won on that day. So it's gone down in history. It's just lucky that I happened to be in that first event on that first day.