

QEF 75th Anniversary Thanksgiving Service St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle

Extract of Chairman's Speech

Queen Elizabeth's Foundation is again honoured to be holding a service here in St George's Chapel and in the presence of Your Royal Highness to whom we are most grateful.

The last time we met here was to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the Foundation and now we are here to celebrate our 75th anniversary. Since that time, five years ago, my predecessor as Chairman, Lord Hamilton, sadly passed away and this moment cannot pass without acknowledging the enormous debt the Foundation owes to him, he having served as Trustee for 23 years and Chairman for 17 years.

The Hamilton devotion to the Foundation is fortunately continued through our President, Corinna, Lady Hamilton.

In the 1930s, there was little or no provision for disabled people. Dame Georgiana Buller and Stanley Evans, an orthopaedic surgeon, encouraged enthusiastically by Queen Elizabeth, the then Duchess of York, had the idea that, if disabled people could be trained in appropriate skills and have their confidence restored, they could find employment.

Employment would give them financial independence and the feelings of self respect enjoyed by their able bodied peers. A Residential College in which to train them was the obvious solution.

Although this was met with considerable scepticism in some quarters, it appealed to Queen Elizabeth. She gave it her unqualified support in a letter to *The Times* to help launch it. With her help, the not inconsiderable sum of £15,000, about £525,000 in today's money, was raised from the public, of which £8,000 to purchase Leatherhead Court came from The Trustees of the Bernhard Baron Memorial.

The Cripples' College, as it was first known (and this name indicates the prevailing attitudes at the time), opened with 16 resident, male trainees on 1 November 1934 and was officially opened by The Duchess of York in June the following year. The success of this initiative, even with its very politically incorrect name, financed by the private sector and with its Royal support, had a considerable influence on changing the attitudes of the time.

In 1939, on the outbreak of War, the foresight of QEF's Founders was rewarded. The ability to train people to work, who would not be fit enough to fight, made an invaluable contribution to the War effort. In 1942, Queen Elizabeth graciously consented to give her name to the Training College, as it had then become.

The British governments' and the public's attitudes to disability have varied over our 75 year history and, while we have not shied away from change, and have been prepared to adapt, we have remained true to our original objective that:

Disabled people should have the same opportunities as everyone else

QEF now comprises four core services:

- **QEF Vocational Services:** providing assessment and training for sustainable employment for adults with disabilities
- **QEF Independent Living Services:** providing young disabled people with the skills they need to live within the community as independently as possible
- **QEF Neuro Rehabilitation Services:** providing Neuro-Rehabilitation and Integrated Learning for young people who have acquired disabilities and associated learning difficulties as a result of brain injury

and

- **QEF Mobility Services:** providing Mobility Assessment and Training for adults with disabilities seeking to improve their independence within the community.

I am constantly amazed when I see the dedication of our staff, many of whom are young people, who work with our clients. The caring and skill they show in what can be physically demanding and emotionally draining is admirable, and it is heart-warming to know that we have young people in our society willing to devote themselves in this way.

It will never be easy to meet our annual expenditure, which now exceeds £11m. To do so, we are heavily dependent upon our loyal supporters and volunteers.

We thank all of you with us today for the generous help we receive from you, without which QEF could not continue.