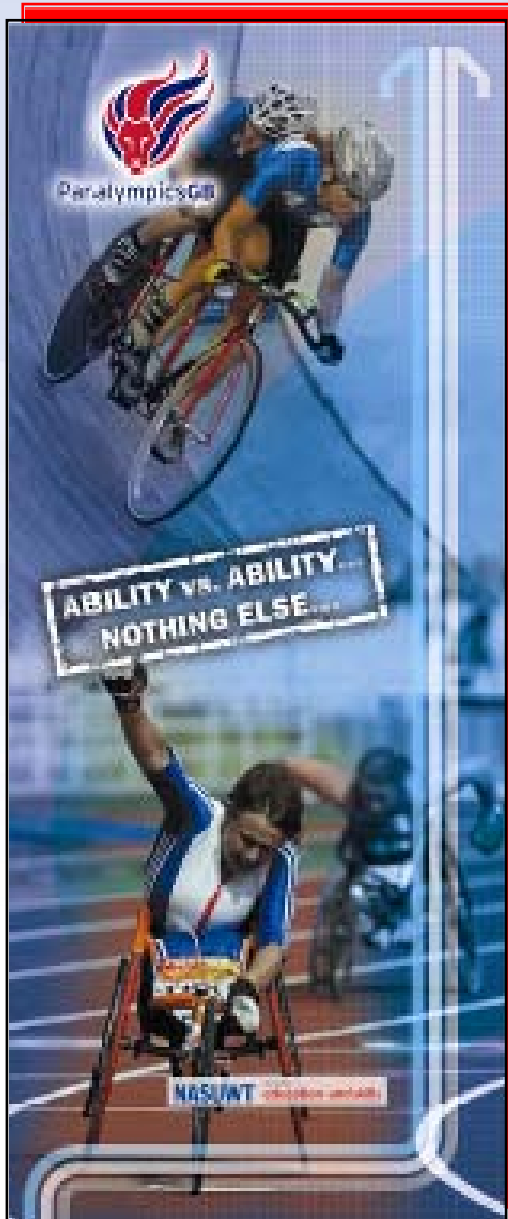


Sixty Years Ago - a resource sheet for *abilityvsability*



Sixty years ago the first Stoke Mandeville Games were held in the UK

29th July 2008 marked the 60th anniversary of the first Stoke Mandeville Games in Aylesbury, England. After World War II, large numbers of servicemen and women returned home to the UK with disabilities caused by the war. In addition, there were many civilians who had been injured on the home front. Traditional methods of rehabilitation could not meet the medical and psychological needs of this large number of people.

Dr. Ludwig Guttmann was asked by the British government to establish the National Spinal Injuries Centre at the Stoke Mandeville Hospital in 1944. Here he introduced sport as a form of recreation and as a support for the remedial treatment and rehabilitation that newly disabled people needed.

On 29 July 1948, the day of the Opening Ceremony of the Olympic Games in London, Great Britain, the Stoke Mandeville Games were founded, and the first competitions for athletes with spinal cord injuries took place on the hospital grounds in Stoke Mandeville. Two British teams with 14 former servicemen and two former servicewomen competed in Archery. From then on, the Stoke Mandeville Games were to be held annually. In 1952, Dutch ex-servicemen joined the movement - and the International Stoke Mandeville Games were established.

In 1960, the International Stoke Mandeville Games were staged for the first time in the same country and city as the Olympic Games. They took place in Rome, Italy in September and medals were presented in 57 events. These Games have now gone down in history as the first ever Paralympic Games.



Through the last sixty years, the Paralympic Movement has gone from strength to strength and become a successful meeting of elite athletes with a disability. They continually demonstrate every aspect of the Paralympic Values, including courage, determination, inspiration and equality. This sixty-year milestone is a reason to celebrate, but but it is also an incentive to continue pushing onwards towards future sporting excellence.

This September in Beijing, Paralympic athletes and the International Paralympic Committee will look ahead to the future and once again inspire all audiences at the Beijing 2008 Paralympic Games. More records will inevitably be broken, and sporting excellence will continue. This will definitely be a 60-year work-in-progress worth celebrating.

For more information about the history of sport for athletes with a disability and the Paralympic Movement, please visit the official website at www.paralympic.org.

[adapted from the International Paralympic Committee website]