



St Wilfrid Lodge NEWS

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William Merritt Centre Talk

St Wilfrid Lodge were delighted to welcome General Manager David Blythe and Paediatric Occupational Therapist Sophie Thomson to talk to us about the history and work of the Centre at our Supper Night.



The Centre is one of the two charities chosen as the 'Master's Charities' this year together with the Leeds Children's Heart Surgery Fund. Funds will be raised throughout the year, primarily at our numerous social events. The talk and presentation were very well received with David and Sophie telling us about the history of the Centre, its current activities and its hope for future development. We are hoping to raise funds specifically to support children and young people who use the Centre and were pleased to see example of some of the special equipment needed.



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The Centre was named after Councillor William Merritt. He was born in Sheepscar, Leeds. He was employed as a Charge Nurse in the Geriatric Dept. at St. James' Hospital, having trained in General Nursing at the Leeds General Infirmary and in Psychiatric Nursing at Menston Hospital.



William Merritt was elected to the City Council in May 1946. His main interest in the Council was in the field of Social Services and in 1953 he pioneered the development of the City's 'Welfare Scheme for the Disabled'. He encouraged the development of voluntary organisations for disabled people in the City. He was Deputy Lord Mayor of Leeds in 1972. During his time as Chairman of the Social Services Committee the proposal to launch the Centre was presented in 1980 and led to the establishment of the Centre. Unhappily William Merritt died before the Centre opened and it was unanimously agreed that the Centre should bear his name in recognition of his work for disabled people over many years. The Centre provides impartial information, advice and assessment on equipment and practical aspects of daily living for disabled people of all ages, their carers, professionals and older people. They offer free assessments and advice on everyday living equipment including stairlifts, wheelchairs, kitchen gadgets, beds, chairs, toileting, mobility scooters. The Centre opened in December 1981 (The Year of the Disabled) to become a permanent legacy of that year. It was enthusiastically supported by both NHS in Leeds and Social Services Department of Leeds City Council. Its vision and mission have remained unchanged since its opening. The Children's Service offers free assessments and advice for disabled children, their parents and carers. The switches project offers free assessment and advice and technology such as computers, iPod's. The Mobility Service offers driving assessment and passenger care assessment as well as how to get wheelchairs in and out of a car.