

## Paralympic flames lit on mountain tops



As the flames that will eventually ignite the Paralympic torch are lit around the UK, the daughter of the games' founder says her father's ambitions were finally realised at London 2012.

Sir Ludwig, a Jewish Doctor who fled Nazi Germany, laid the foundations for the Paralympics in the post-war years when he began providing sporting therapy for injured servicemen at Stoke Mandeville Hospital.

His daughter Eva Loeffler, who served refreshments at those first games in Stoke Mandeville, told Jon Snow's Paralympic Show the games were very different to what they have now become. "It was all very low key lots of laughter - and lots of drink, which wouldn't happen now."

Ms Loeffler said that her father would have been thrilled to see athletes like Oscar Pistorius take part in the Olympic Games as well as the Paralympics. "In 1956 he said he dreamed of a time when disabled people took part in the Olympic Games and this year it came true."

The first Paralympic Games in 1948 involved just 14 paraplegics taking part in just a few sports including archery, table tennis and javelin.

In 1976 competitors with other disabilities took part for the first time and the city where the Olympics were held began to host the games.

For London 2012 Paralympic Games, the torch relay will begin at Stoke Mandeville, where flames lit by four separate teams from the four corners of the UK came together.

### **'Team effort'**

The teams climbed Scafell Pike, Slieve Donard, Snowdon and Ben Nevis - the highest points in

England, Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland respectively.

The groups at Snowdon and Slieve Donard both reached the top by late morning and lit their flames using a combination of kindling, dry grass and man-made metallic rods, which they struck against rough surfaces to make the sparks.

The flames at Ben Nevis and Scafell Pike were alight by early afternoon.

A combination of Scouts from local communities, mountain guides and leaders, both disabled and non-disabled, took part in the special expeditions.

Lord Coe, who was with the Snowdon team, said from the summit: "It's been a great team effort this morning. Quite cold in places so a couple of rests, but we all knew this."

He said people would be "blown away" by what they would see in the Paralympic Games.

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Andrew Thorp, Scouts spokesman

The torches are travelling in miners' lanterns to London, Cardiff, Belfast and Edinburgh for a day of Paralympic celebration at the end of this week and over the bank holiday weekend.

And the four flames will be united at the spiritual home of the Paralympics, Stoke Mandeville, in Buckinghamshire, before beginning a 24-hour, 92-mile journey to the Olympic Stadium in London with the help of 580 torchbearers ahead of the Opening Ceremony on Wednesday 29 August.

## **Inspiration**

Inspiration for the climb came from the massive public support for the Olympic torch relay, Scouts spokesman Andrew Thorp said.

"The young people and adults involved are really excited. Lots of them have said to me that they were so inspired when they saw the Olympic torch relay a few weeks ago and this is just an amazing, amazing opportunity."

He added: "For the Olympic torch relay there were over 100 Scout volunteers members involved in carrying the flame then. It just came out of there really and if there's one thing Scouts are known for it's for lighting flames and having adventures."

Lord Coe said: "The combination of teamwork and human endeavour being used to create the flame is a very fitting start to the Paralympic torch relay celebrations. This group of inspirational individuals will be lighting the way to a fantastic 10 days of sport."

[video](#)

Andy Davies