



## TRIBUTE TO SUZANNE ALLDAY

In the annals of UK athletics throwing history, Suzanne Allday is one of the greatest British throwers ever – an outstanding shot putter and discus thrower, she became a pioneer trailblazer in hammer throwing as well.

Born Suzanne Farmer, on 26 November 1934 in Shoreham, near Brighton, she was initially coached by her sportsman father. At age 15 (when she won her first English Schools discus title) she finished second in the 1950 UK senior rankings, an incredible achievement in an event where years of experience are normally required to make an impact.

Suzanne competed in three Olympic Games (1952 – when just seventeen – 1956 and 1960), won sixteen WAAA titles (seven discus, seven shot outdoors and two indoors) and set at least 18 British records in these events. She won four British Empire and Commonwealth Games medals – discus silver in 1954 and gold in 1958, and silver and bronze in the shot in 1958 and 1962.

Suzanne Farmer married hammer thrower Peter Allday on Boxing Day 1953. They were married for twenty-five years.

Her greatest victory in athletics was at the 1958 British Empire and Commonwealth Games in Cardiff (sixty years ago) which she dramatically won with a final round 45.90. The Official Report of the Games reported:

*“There was quiet tenseness as Suzanne prepared for her last throw. In complete silence she stepped into the circle just as the wind blew up with increased force. She waited, an age it seemed, for the wind to abate. Then came a lull: Suzanne turned with a smooth and strong acceleration, the discus sped from her hand, a winner all the way – a most dramatic win with the last throw of the competition”*

She later told athletics historian Dave Thurlow that she changed out of her training shoes and into sand-shoes before that final round, reasoning that

*“I thought I could go faster in the circle. I knew I had won as the discus left my hand. It was the greatest moment in my athletics life and made all the going without worthwhile”*

She was second in the shot in Cardiff - and a few weeks later finished 5th in the European shot put final with a UK record of 14.66, less than a metre behind the

famous Tamara Press. This fifth place is still the best ever UK result in a European women's shot final

Suzanne Allday experimented with hammer throwing in the 1950s with her then husband Peter, one of the founding members of the hammer throwing association the Hammer Circle. In an interview she claimed a best mark of 148ft (45.10 metres) with the 16 lb hammer. Such a mark seems remarkable and would be the equivalent of way over 60m with a 4K hammer.

She enjoyed throwing the hammer, and used it in training instead of weight training. Unfortunately as a woman she was not allowed to become a member of the Hammer Circle in the 1950s! The Hammer Circle has a far more enlightened view now, with many women members, including Olympic bronze medallist Sophie Hitchon.

Suzanne and Peter Allday were competing in an era where the Russians were the dominant force in their events – they met the Russians many times in matches and major Championships. The Russians would be training, including weight training, more-or-less full-time, while in contrast the British couple were holding down jobs and training when they could. Around the time of the 1958 Games, Peter was working as a teacher and Suzanne the matron at a boy's boarding school in Norfolk. They would get about by cycling or motor bike – no expenses were available to athletes in those days.

Ultimately Suzanne competed 35 times for Great Britain. She and Peter retired in 1964 and had twins a year later. In a surprise comeback in 1977 Suzanne returned to the top twelve in the UK rankings in both shot and discus. Her final UK records were 15.18 in the shot (1964) and 47.70 in the discus (1958).

Later on Suzanne was married to Ray Goodison for more than 30 years. She maintained an interest in athletics to the end of her life – attending her County Championships just a few months before she died. She passed away on 26 July 2017.

Ian Tempest  
Secretary, Hammer Circle