

Autumn 2025 Vol 22 Issue 2

THE SURVIVOR

Irish Polio News

Polio
Survivors
Ireland



Jerry Buttimer, Minister of State for Community Development, Charities, and Rural Transport, meeting our Cathaoirleach, Macrina Clancy, and Advocacy and Policy Officer, Ciara Power at Carmichael Ireland on 16th April.

Photo Courtesy of Carmichael Ireland



Organ donation is your decision.

A register is available for those who would like to opt out of organ donation

Visit hse.ie/organdonation for more information.
#HaveThatConversation

Contents

| | |
|--------------------------------|----|
| From the Chair - | 3 |
| Conference & AGM - | 5 |
| Conference - Keynote Speaker - | 7 |
| AGM 2024 Minutes - | 9 |
| EGM Update - | 12 |
| Empowering Nurses - | 13 |
| Volunteer & MEO Updates - | 15 |
| Poetry Corner - | 17 |
| Book Review - | 18 |
| Past Times - | 19 |
| Minister's Visit - | 21 |
| Social Support Groups - | 22 |
| Notice Board - | 25 |
| Fundraising News - | 27 |

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) To facilitate your membership with us, Polio Survivors Ireland will process personal and, if applicable, especially if you use any of our services, possibly sensitive information relating to you both digitally and in manual format for the duration of your membership. **You have the right to access this information at any time by calling 01 889 8920 or emailing info@polio.ie.** This information will be destroyed if, or when, your membership of the organisation ceases.

FROM THE CHAIR

I hope you all have had a lovely summer and in particular enjoyed the wonderful sunshine last May – a time when we could all enjoy the forty shades of green, leading to the lush deep green of summer.

The European Polio Union (EPU) held its conference and AGM in Burgos, Western Spain at the end of May. The University of Burgos has set up a Chair for the study of polio and Post Polio Syndrome (PPS). This is the only university in Europe, and probably the world, that has established a department to study polio and PPS. We thought it important for the EPU to establish a relationship with the university from the beginning. The university gave us the use of one of their lecture theatres for the conference and the AGM was held the following day in



a meeting room in the hospital attached to the university. Pierre Parrot, Polio France, was elected President. After our AGM on Saturday and a

lovely lunch, we were treated to a guided tour of Burgos Cathedral, a UNESCO world heritage site. The art work and craftsmanship is just magnificent. We expressed our thanks to Jerónimo (Professor González-Bernal, University of Burgos) for the excellent hospitality and expressed the hope that the university and the EPU would work closely together in the years ahead.



A warm welcome to our new CEO, Nicola Fogarty who has just joined us. We wish her every success and assure her of the support of the Board and Staff.

As you will have seen from the enclosures with this issue of the Survivor, our own conference and AGM is on the horizon. It would be wonderful if as many as possible of you joined us on the day. It is a lovely occasion and a great way to meet up with old friends and make new ones. I look forward to meeting you there.

Time flies and it is hard to believe that four years have flown since I became Cathaoirleach. Now in accordance with our Constitution it is time for me to hand the baton to another board member.

I would like to take this opportunity of expressing my profound thanks to my fellow directors, all of whom have been so supportive and given me good advice when I needed it. It has been a real team effort and I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

Another group to whom I am would like to thank are the wonderful staff, for their help cheerfully given at all times. We are truly blessed with our staff, as you will all agree, who

look after us with such care and understanding.

So again, I thank you, the members, our loyal staff and our excellent board, and wish you every success in the years ahead knowing that Polio Survivors Ireland is in such good hands.

Sincerely

Macrina Clancy
Cathaoirleach



Do you have an URGENT NEED?

Talk to us

ACT
NOW

We are here
to help

ADVICE
INFORMATION
SUPPORT
ADVOCACY
A LISTENING EAR

Contact Kerrie in the office at
01 889 89 20
Or by email sic@polio.ie

Contact Ciara in the office at
01 889 89 20
Or by email asic@polio.ie

Confidentiality Assured

Conference & AGM 2025

This year's Conference & AGM takes place in Dublin, in the Green Isle Hotel, St John's Drive, Newland's Cross, Dublin 22. We look forward to seeing you there. All the information is included in this mail out and hotel rates and directions, plus our speaker's bio are here in the Survivor magazine.

Hotel Room Rates

We have held a number of rooms in the Green Isle Hotel for this year's Conference, including the accessible bedrooms. These will be on a first come first served basis.

Room rates are as follows:

- **€130 Single Occupancy (B&B)**
- **€140 Double/Twin (B&B)**
- **€190 Triple (B&B)**

Members can take advantage of these rates by calling the hotel and by mentioning that they are attending the Polio Conference on Wednesday 24th September.

Contact: Tel: 01 412 3700 or email: reservations@greenislehotel.com

The cancellation policy is 48 hours prior to arrival, and card details are required to secure the booking. The room is payable upon arrival. Please note that these are discounted rates based on the current published rate.

DIRECTIONS - GREEN ISLE HOTEL

The Green Isle Hotel is located close to Newlands Cross, overlooking the main Dublin to Cork/Limerick N7 dual-carriageway.

Driving Directions from M50:

Follow M50 to N7 in South Dublin. Take exit 9 from M50. Merge onto N7. At junction 2, take the R136 exit to Grange Castle/Kingswood. At the roundabout, take the 3rd exit onto Grange Castle Rd/R136. At the roundabout, take the 3rd exit onto Green Isle Rd/Old Naas Rd. Turn right and then turn right again.

Driving Directions from City Centre:

From the city centre, follow signs for the N7/Cork/Limerick/Naas Road southbound. You will pass the Red Cow complex on your left. Continue straight on the fly over until you see Kingswood Exit 2 and take this exit. At the top of the slip road, take the 3rd exit off the roundabout. At the next roundabout, take the 3rd exit & follow the signs for Green Isle Road/Boot Road. Continue along and the hotel is on your right.

Driving Directions from Naas:

From Naas follow the signs for the N7 Dublin Road Northbound. Continue straight on the N7. You will pass the City West Business Park Exit on your left. Continue straight ahead and take the Tallaght/Kingswood Exit 2 on your left. At the top of the slip road, take the 2nd exit off the roundabout onto the Green Isle Road. You will pass Corkagh Park on your left and continue straight for another 1km until you reach the Green Isle Hotel on the right.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT - BUS - From Dublin City Centre: Dublin Bus Number 69 from Hawkins Street in Dublin City Centre will take you directly to the door of the Green Isle Hotel in approx. 30-45 mins.

LUAS - Take the Red Luas line as far as the Red Cow stop. From there, the hotel is a quick 5 mins in a taxi. We can arrange a taxi for you from the Luas stop to the Hotel if you give us 1 weeks' notice. The Luas takes approx. 30 mins and they go every 5-10 mins.

Train - If you arrive at either Dublin Connolly or Dublin Heuston Stations you can take the Luas Red Line to the Red Cow stop – see above.

Bus Eireann - If you arrive at Busaras you can take the Luas Red Line to the Red Cow stop – see above.

ARE YOU MAKING A WILL?

Please consider leaving a Legacy to Polio Survivors Ireland in your will.



Leaving a gift to the charity in your Will can help us greatly to continue providing support to polio survivors.



You can alternatively request donations to the charity in lieu of flowers.



Contact Alan Raftery at 01 872 7120 or email: legal@holohanlaw.ie and Alan will explain everything you need to know to draft your will.

HOLOHAN | LANE
LLP SOLICITORS

Keynote Speaker



Dr Amrit Paudel

The 2025 Keynote Address will be presented by Dr Amrit Paudel, Associate Professor of Pharmaceutical Technology, from the University of Graz in Austria. Amrit will speak on the history of the current polio vaccine, and how new technology can help to redefine new vaccine delivery systems. Amrit will also discuss how new drug therapies will help and aid current populations affected by polio. Amrit currently holds the role as Scientific Director with Johnson & Johnson in Liege, Belgium, and is

responsible for a team of fifteen formulation chemists in drug design and CMC (Chemistry, Manufacturing, and Controls) development. Previously Amrit held the position as Deputy Scientific Director of the Research Centre, for Pharmaceutical Engineering, GMBH, in Graz, Austria. Amrit worked strategically with cross disciplinary leadership in modelling and simulation, formulation and drug delivery including vaccine design.

Amrit has worked closely with leading pharmaceutical companies including Roche, Takeda, Novartis and Johnson & Johnson, delivering cutting edge research, creating new drug design and delivery concept.

Amrit is very personable and has a unique style in presenting complex scientific jargon into an easy to understand approach. Amrit looks forward to engaging with the members at the Conference.

If anyone has questions they'd like to put to Amrit, we can pass these on before the event. Contact Emma in the office, 01 889 8920, cdo@polio.ie.



This year's Conference & AGM takes place in Dublin, in the Green Isle Hotel, Wednesday 24th September.

www.greenislehotel.com



Unrestricted Living, One Step at a Time.

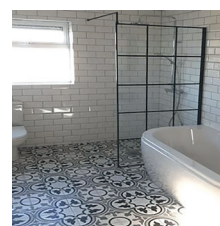
We offer a Wide Range of Stairlifts, Disabled Bathrooms and Mobility Products in Dublin & Ireland

Irish Stairlift and Bathrooms (AKA ISB Mobility)

Enhancing Accessibility and Independence for Irish Homes. As Ireland's population ages, the need for accessible and safe living spaces has become increasingly important. At Irish Stairlift and Bathrooms, we understand the importance of creating homes that are both functional and comfortable for individuals of all ages and abilities.

Our Solutions - Our stairlifts are designed to provide safe and easy access to all areas of your home, eliminating the risk of falls and injuries. Our experienced team will work with you to install a stairlift that meets your specific needs and budget.

Our bathroom adaptations are designed to provide a safe and comfortable experience. From walk-in showers to grab bars and raised toilets,



we offer a range of solutions to meet your needs.

We are experts in wet rooms and level access showers.



Lift Your Way to Independence.

We are approved council suppliers and have been serving the community for over 26 years.

Why Choose Us - Experienced Team Our team of experts has over 26 years of experience in installing stairlifts and bathroom adaptations.

Personalised Service - We work closely with you to understand your needs and provide personalised solutions.

We use only the highest quality products to ensure that our installations are safe and durable.

We have a vast experience and a deep knowledge of the market, and through this experience we have learned to appreciate that every customer has their own individual needs.

Contact Us - If you're looking for a reliable and experienced company to enhance the accessibility and independence of your home, look no further than Irish Stairlift and Bathrooms (AKA ISB Mobility).

**ISB, Unit 6 Clane Business Park, College Road, Clane, Co. Kildare, W91NF86
T: 01 6167079 or 045 892696. E: showroom@irishstairlifts.ie W: www.irishstairlifts.ie**

AGM Minutes

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Post Polio Support Group CLG,

Thursday, 13th June, 2024 in the Tullamore Court Hotel, Tullamore, Co. Offaly

The Chair, Macrina Clancy, opened the meeting at 2:20m. She welcomed the members present in person and those attending via Zoom. She declared that the required quorum of 20 members present or by proxy was met.

Minutes of last year's AGM

The minutes of the 2023 AGM were sent to members in advance of the meeting and were adopted on a proposal by Pat McCabe, seconded by Anne Shanahan.

Matters Arising

No matters arising were raised.

Chair's Report

The Chair then delivered her report. Macrina reported on some highlights of last year: the organisation lost €5,694, new staff members recruited during the year were Advocacy Officer, Ciara Power, and two Member Engagement Officers, Órna Maddock & Nuala McLaughlin. The organisation continued to develop its new strategic plan with surveys, workshops and meetings held.

Service provision during the year included 78 Aid & Appliances provided to members, 48 members supported

with therapies, 267 members received a heating grant and 292 other members sought advice & information from the office.

The Chair described the important work of the Advocacy & Policy Officer in 2023 along with the impact of the Member Engagement Officers. Other developments were the recruitment of 35 new members and 6 new active members. Pat McGillion was elected to the Board at last year's AGM and earlier this year sadly, Mary Byrne stepped down from the Board. Macrina also advised the members on the follow up to the presentation by Frans Nollet at last year's conference and discussions that had since taken place with the Royal Hospital Donnybrook and the National Rehabilitation Hospital. Macrina updated the members on the work of Pat McGillion and herself on the Board of the European Polio Union and how developments in other countries can inform and support our work here. Finally, the Chair introduced the new staff appointed recently to the organisation; Siobhan Banville temporary Policy Researcher, Aline Gomes, who is supporting Administration, and Elizabeth Derwin, the new Administration Officer.

On completion of her report the Chair then asked if anyone had any questions. Peter Barron referenced the 35 new

members recruited and asked by comparison how many members has passed away? The Chair referenced the In Memoriam slide and minute's silence earlier in the day, and responded that it was about 30 members. As there were no other questions, the Chair's report was then adopted on a proposal by Peter Barron, seconded by James Doorley.

Company Secretary's Report

The Company Secretary, Fintan Foy, then delivered his report. Fintan advised the meeting that Polio Survivors Ireland made all the required returns to the various regulatory bodies. There were 8 meetings of the Board and 6 meetings of the Board Sub-committees in 2023. In accordance with the constitution Frank Mitchell and Pat Ryan were stepping down from the Board at this year's AGM, but were offering themselves for re-election. As the number of candidates seeking election was less than the number of vacancies, Fintan advised the meeting that they were both deemed elected. Therefore, the Elected Directors for the year ahead were Frank Mitchell, Pat Ryan, Macrina Clancy, Zaynab Salman, Pat McGillion and Charlie Smith. The Board Nominated Directors were, Miriam Kavanagh, James Doorley and himself and, recently the Board had appointed a new Board Nominated

Director, Dr Vera Keatings. This appointment, however was too late for ratification at this year's AGM and therefore the members will be asked to ratify Vera's appointment at next year's AGM. In the meantime, however, she will sit on the Board.

The Co. Secretary then referred to Resolution 3 to be voted on at this AGM, the proposed change of the organisation's legal name, from Post Polio Support Group CLG to Polio Survivors Ireland CLG. If passed, this name change will require updates to the constitution as well as the approval of the Charities Regulator. He advised the meeting that the Board was recommending this change of the legal name to the members. That completed his report and as there were no questions the Co. Secretary's report was adopted on a proposal by Peter Barron, seconded by Evelyn Wainwright.

Treasurer's Presentation

The Treasurer, Miriam Kavanagh, then delivered her report. Miriam presented a series of slides illustrating financial figures from the Audited Accounts for 2023. Key figures included income of €593,544, a 22% increase on the previous year due primarily to the Pobal SSNO funding of €83,000 in the year.

Total expenditure was €599,239, an increase of about 20%. Overall, there was a loss of €5,695 compared to a loss of €13,074 in 2022. In her opinion, the organisation delivers good value for money given the level of services provided within the available resources. The Treasurer presented details of expenditure in 2023 across the various headings, highlighting the increase in expenditure arising from the Pobal SSNO grant, as well as costs incurred from the EGM and the office move last year. Finally, Miriam explained that the Auditors, BMOL, had advised us they were no longer doing audits. This presented us with a dilemma given the tight timelines for auditing the accounts and presenting them to the members at the AGM. BMOL recommended Whelan Dowling & Assocs and the Board appointed them to conduct the 2023 audit which they did on time and at an acceptable cost. The Board was now recommending the appointment of Whelan Dowling & Assocs as auditors for the next three years. The Treasurer completed her report and, as there were no questions, the report was adopted on a proposal by Peter Barron, seconded by Seamus Haughton.

Resolutions

The Chair then took the resolutions.

Resolution 1: Approval of the 2023 Financial Statements was proposed by Jim Connolly and seconded by Kay

Farraher. A vote was called among the members present in the room and online who had not submitted a proxy vote in the post. The resolution was passed by 196 votes in favour, 2 abstentions and 0 votes against.

Resolution 2: To appoint Whelan Dowling & Associates as Auditors for 2024 was proposed by Susan Dowling, seconded by John Dolan and passed by 198 in favour, 2 abstentions and 0 votes against.

Resolution 3: To change the legal name to Polio Survivors Ireland CLG was proposed by Mick Keegan, seconded by Monica McGowan and carried by 185 in favour, 3 abstentions and 4 votes against.

As there were only two nominations for four Board vacancies there was no need for a Board election and both Directors, Frank Mitchell and Pat Ryan, were deemed re-elected.

AOB

There was no AOB.

The Chair then thanked all the delegates for attending in person and on Zoom, she especially thanked her colleagues on the Board for their hard work over the past year, and she expressed her gratitude to the staff for their work on behalf of the members and in the organisation of the event. The meeting was then declared closed by the Chair.

EGM Update

On Friday 11th April, our EGM took place at 2 p.m. on Zoom and in-person in Carmichael Centre. The motion stated:
Resolution To amend article 14 (1) of the constitution:

Existing wording of Constitution 14. (1)

Subject to paragraph (2) the Company shall in the first half of each calendar year hold a general meeting as its annual general meeting in addition to any other meetings in that year and shall specify the meeting as such in the notice calling it and not more than fifteen months shall elapse between the date of one annual general meeting of the Company and that of the next.

Proposed Amended Wording 14. (1)

Subject to paragraph (2) the Company shall hold a general meeting as its annual general meeting in addition to any other meetings in that year and shall specify the meeting as such in the notice calling it and not more than fifteen months shall elapse between the date of one annual general meeting of the Company and that of the next.



The motion was carried, with 118 in favor, and one abstention. The motion was submitted to the Companies Registration Office (CRO) for approval. Thanks to everyone who participated in the voting and attended on the day.

Empowering Nurses...

By Leo Brown

Mayo member, Bridie McMahon, a former board member of Polio Survivors Ireland, spoke at the final event of the 2025 National Immunisation Conference series on Wednesday, 30th April.

Over that month, the HSE hosted four events across Ireland with the theme of “**Empowering Nurses, Protecting Communities: Immunisation for All,**” as an initiative to ensure healthcare professionals have up-to-date and research-supported information on immunisation.

This year's speakers included representatives from public health medicine, General Practice, HSE social inclusion, the National Immunisation Office, clinical risk advisors, and

nurse specialists—many of whom contributed to the interactive sessions. There were over 1,000 attendees, most of which were General Practice Nurses, across the four events, engaging with speakers, healthcare professionals and other colleagues from many areas of the HSE.

Bridie, who contracted polio at the age of four and spent four years lying in hospital beds, gave a moving and deeply personal speech. She spoke about her early memories of illness, the trauma of long hospital stays, separation from family, the long-term effects, and the emotional and physical tolls of adapting to life with a disability.

“It's important for those attending conferences like that to hear a survivor's story since there's only a few thousand of us left,” said Bridie. “There should be more workshops or Conferences to make our story known.”



Bridie McMahon

Along with her speech, the Polio & Us book was presented to the healthcare professionals present, so they could read more about some of the lived experiences of polio survivors.

“Bridie's contribution was exceptional. She's a powerful public speaker and delivered her story with great dignity and clarity,” said Mairead Murphy, a Professional Development Coordinator for General Practice Nurses. “Many attendees were visibly emotional. Several approached me afterward to say how deeply they were impacted by her story.”

Bridie also spoke at the Carrick-on-Shannon and Limerick events, where she received overwhelmingly positive feedback.

Two other members of Polio Survivors Ireland, Patrick Skehan and Mick Keegan, also spoke about their polio and post-polio experiences at the Kilkenny and Dublin conferences.

Their voices continue to be recognised and valued by the HSE, offering



Mick Keegan

healthcare professionals a meaningful, real-world perspective, particularly when it comes to post-polio care and disability awareness, a huge positive for all polio survivors.

Mairead Murphy believes that speeches like Bridie's have 'heightened awareness' around the needs of polio survivors. *“This type of engagement supports stronger policy development and meaningful service improvement.”*

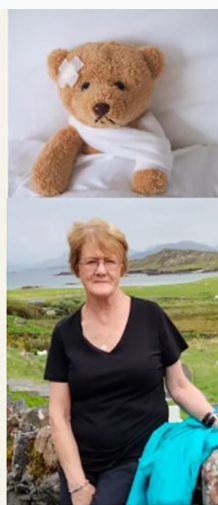


Patrick Skehan



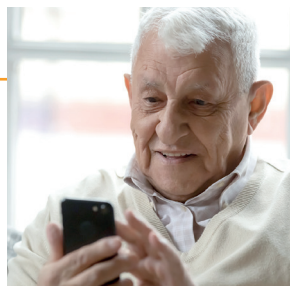
MY STORY BRIDIE MCMAHON

- Getting sick as a child – aged 4
- Going to hospital – the fear of the unknown
- Early memories of illness and separation
- Lifelong impact



Volunteers

Hi, it's Clodagh, Volunteer Officer at Polio Survivors Ireland. I'm delighted to share the first two volunteer roles we're looking to fill this year. If one of them sounds like a good fit for you, I'd really love to hear from you!



Telephone Support Leader

*Your Voice Can Brighten
Someone's Day*

Polio Survivors Ireland is looking for kind and friendly volunteers to become **Telephone Support Leaders**. In this role, you'll make 3 friendly phone calls each month to people who have polio - just to chat, check in, and help them feel less alone.

No special experience needed. If you're a good listener, patient, and comfortable using the phone, we'll give you all the training and support you need. Flexible hours to suit your life.

Be part of something meaningful.

Full training and support provided. Flexible hours. Be part of a caring team.
Get in touch with Clodagh today- clodagh@polio.ie / 086 823 3120

Help Us Reach More Polio Survivors

Your Story Can Make a Difference

Polio Survivors Ireland is looking for volunteers to join our Recruitment Network.

If you're a Polio Survivor, you can help by sharing your story and making friendly phone calls to others affected by polio. Help us allow those living with polio feel supported and less alone by becoming a member of Polio Survivors Ireland.

*Flexible role. Full support.
Real impact.*

Meo Update - Nuala Mc Laughlin

Despite the obvious upheavals, lots of forward-planning and hard work ensures that 2025 is another very productive year to date. We were, of course, saddened to lose our CEO Fran, but Emma has been providing us with

a steady hand, excellent support and guidance, as we navigate the seas of change!

I've been working closely with our new Volunteer Officer, Clodagh Swords. Having covered aspects of Clodagh's

role means we have been collaborating quite a bit, and I am excited to see the new developments she will bring to the organisation.

I have been working closely with the Social Support Group Convenors & Assistant Convenors for my region too, seeing great efforts and progress, with an overall increase in meeting numbers and impact. The commitment and effort shown by Convenors/Assistant Convenors and the SSG members is heartwarming and impressive. This will help to ensure a bright future for Social Support, as the work they do is so meaningful to those who attend.

A major emphasis for me for the next few months will be to 'reach out' to more members on an individual

basis. Ideally those who I have as yet to engage with. We know there are members that the organisation is not currently hearing from, and our aim is to link in and support as many of them as possible.

Direct calls are an aspect I enjoy most, as talking, listening, and learning about our members allows us to consider how we can better assist and support them. Calls offer a great opportunity to connect, get true insights and understanding, and act as a bridge between our members, the Polio Survivors Ireland staff, and other external organisations.

It's good to talk – if I can ever be of assistance, please get in touch. Nuala: 086 1672036, nualameo@polio.ie

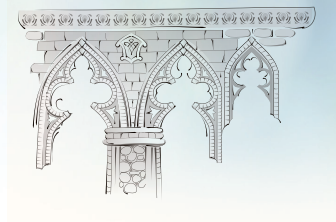
Meo Update - Órna Maddock

Most recently I have had the privilege of meeting some of the members in South Tipperary/Waterford at an Area Meeting, held in Clonmel. It was great to meet all the members but especially those who don't attend Social Support Groups or contact the office. It's always wonderful to see how much these members can get out of these meetings.

Nuala and I have also just held the annual Convenor meeting - an online meeting for all the present convenors to meet, speak with each other and for us to give any updates/new information. We were also able to introduce Clodagh, the new Volunteer Officer. It's always brilliant to hear from the Convenors and to have them connect with each other. This was the first time Nuala and I held the meeting on our own, so we're delighted it went so well.

Tomfenloh

E.R. Bailey



Beyond calm waters of nestling swans
 And yellow beaked black water hens,
 St. Luightighern came and built a church.
 A place devout above the verge of Fenloe,
 Where long stemmed rushes crown the shallows
 And Granahan spreads an evening shadow.
 A place of learning,
 Where scholars swamped through Celtic script
 And tread beneath the shallow lintel
 To kneel and harmonise their praise.
 Exposed,
 The nave now cradle to the rook and wren.
 An open palm stretched out to grasp a shower
 To weep within the ivy'd chancel.
 Tall lancet tracery disperses light
 Where bread and wine were offered once
 To contrite hearts.
 In solitude,
 The balm of spirits past envelop,
 And still the weary soul
 In Christ's eternal sanctuary.

A poem by one of our late
 members, the talented
 Edwin Bailey RIP.



Book Review

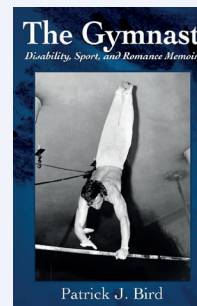
"I was soon doing well on the horizontal and parallel bars, okay on the pommel horse, and best on still rings. Vaulting and floor exercise, forget it. My polio leg thigh was no thicker than my knee, and the lower leg was little more than a stick. The muscle was not there. Sitting in a chair, for instance, I hadn't the strength to extend the polio leg. I did better, however, moving the pathetic thing side-to-side. This was critical. To keep the polio leg from flopping about like a wet noodle on the apparatus, I could press it against the good leg, which would serve as a kind of splint."

In 1955, Patrick Bird won the YMCA Nationals for gymnastics, overcoming the challenges of being a polio survivor and exemplifying his sheer toughness and perseverance.

Patrick J. Bird, Professor Emeritus at University of Florida, has announced the publication of his historical autobiography, which includes stories about his life as a working-class Polio survivor in New York City during the 1950s. From gymnastics and electrical work to fighting and love, his story tugs at the heartstrings while weaving in moments of humour that lift the mood.

"I got polio in 1940 and was four. Mom said at Rockaway Beach. Was in an Iron Lung at Bellevue Hospital for a week or so. When I got out of the Iron Lung, they sent me to the Reconstruction Home.

Stayed there for nineteen months. First, both legs got full casts. Then, just the left. Next came the long braces. I started to walk again. But the left foot didn't work right. They operated on it in three places and had a cast again to the knee. I then got my braces back when the half-cast came off."



Throughout the book, Bird reflects on many barriers he faced. After completing trade school, ranking third in his class and passing the Transit Authority Electrician's Exam, Bird spent the summer applying for electrician jobs across New York City, only to be denied positions on the basis of "failed physical exams." Although the electrician market was wide open, Bird struggled to secure employment, highlighting the social injustice of the time.

Bird also recounts his many run-ins with bullies. Lessons from his father on Italian-American boxer Jake LaMotta and his bull-rush fighting style, helped him hold his own in times of conflict.

Throughout this autobiography, Bird sheds light on the lived experiences of a working-class polio survivor, combining a compelling personal narrative with a broader history of disability and social injustice during the mid-20th century. *By Leo Brown*

PAST TIMES

Remembering Cork 1956

Leo Brown

A recent polio outbreak in Papua New Guinea reminds us why vaccines are still crucial.

Although eradicated in the Western world over 20 years ago, the poliovirus still lingers in fragile and conflict-affected areas. A recent outbreak in Papua New Guinea resulted in two infected children, as reported by the World Health Organisation. Low vaccination coverage, poor sanitation, and weak health infrastructure have caused the once-rampant disease to begin circulating again, reminding us that the poliovirus continues to exist, and efforts for global eradication are still ongoing.



Decades earlier, the same fear gripped communities much closer to home. In the summer and early autumn of 1956, Cork city and county was hit with a devastating outbreak of polio.



Summers in Cork often consisted of sunny weather, with children swimming in the River Lee and playing football in the street. But that year, the roads were quiet, and the river was deserted. As polio cases rose rapidly, parents kept their kids inside, away from potential exposure. By 9 August, there had been 90 cases in the city and 34 in County Cork. Patients were transferred across the country and often endured years of treatments. It wasn't until 1957 that polio cases returned to normal levels.

Soon after, the first polio vaccine was rolled out nationwide. In the following decades, Ireland expanded its immunisation campaigns, introducing the oral polio vaccine in 1960 and integrating it into child healthcare.



Although the mass immunisation efforts across Europe successfully eliminated the disease in 2002, the global eradication effort has reached a new phase – focused not solely on vaccination, but the careful management of the remaining virus samples.

Holding the virus in facilities has helped scientists develop new treatments, such as the novel oral polio vaccine in 2011, which enabled mass rollout in regions such as sub-Saharan Africa. However, storing the poliovirus does carry a risk. Improper sanitation, deteriorating infrastructure, or outdated safety procedures could lead to a viral outbreak. To mitigate the threat, the World Health Organisation ensures that contained polioviruses will be inventoried, then destroyed or, if retained, stored in poliovirus-essential facilities.

Through a rigorous process, polio-essential laboratories can obtain a Certification of Containment. The laboratories must first submit an application to the National Authority for Containment, which will be thoroughly reviewed.

On April 10th, a Belgian-based laboratory became the first polio-essential facility to be fully certified by the World Health Organisation. This marks the first of many, as the Global Commission for the Certification of Eradication of Poliomyelitis states that all facilities containing the poliovirus are expected to have obtained a Certification of Containment by the end of 2026.

These international safeguards are part of a broader effort to ensure that polio cannot reemerge in Europe. Yet outbreaks serve as a reminder that there is still a fight for global eradication. Though separated by nearly 70 years and on opposite sides of the world, Papua New Guinea's outbreak is reminiscent of an outbreak in Ireland. Whether in mid-century Cork or modern-day Papua New Guinea, polio managed to find a foothold, reminding us that the virus exploits vulnerability and that vaccination is key to public health.



Minister's Visit By Leo Brown

On April 16th, along with our fellow charities, we welcomed Jerry Buttimer, Minister of State for Community Development, Charities, and Rural Transport, to the Carmichael Centre. Our Cathaoirleach, Macrina Clancy, and Advocacy and Policy Officer, Ciara Power, discussed our work as an organisation and highlighted the areas which need the most funding.

"It was a pleasure to meet with Minister Buttimer last Wednesday," said Ciara Power (APO). "Opportunities like this are always valuable for raising awareness of our organisation and sharing our key advocacy priorities."

With Minister Buttimer's portfolio including community development, rural transport and charities – areas that directly affect the lives of polio survivors – engaging with Polio Survivors Ireland offers important insights into the challenges our community faces.

These include the movement of polio survivors from disability payments

to the state pension after 67, which ignores the continuing high cost of disability. Also poor accessibility in public spaces and rural transport, and ongoing lack of awareness around Late Effects of Polio and Post Polio Syndrome.

Minister Buttimer understood the importance of polio and Post Polio Syndrome advocacy. He noted the polio epidemics, particularly in Cork, where he is from. "It was a really significant era in Irish history."

Our APO, Ciara emphasised the importance of this opportunity to meet. "I look forward to continuing our engagement with him, particularly around future funding opportunities for the sector."

This event in Carmichael Centre allowed us to highlight our work, ensuring that polio survivors remain visible among TDs, as we work towards improving the lives of those living with the impact of this disease.



Ciara Power, Macrina Clancy and Minister Jerry Buttimer

SOCIAL SUPPORT GROUPS

Although the rain poured down all day, our June outing turned out to be really successful. Eighteen of us met in Blanchardstown Shopping Centre and had chat and plenty to eat. We invited our new members which gave them the opportunity to have one-to-one chats with members of the group.

We then went to Don Baker, in the lovely Draóicht Theatre which is located in the Blanchardstown Shopping Centre complex. We really enjoyed Don, who is on tour singing and talking about his life as a child living in the inner city of Dublin. He is in his seventies now and still has a great voice.

Some photos were taken by our photographer for the night, Brigid. Thanks to all for coming along, as it made the night so much more enjoyable.

DUBLIN NORTH CITY



BRAY SSG

Pictured: Garda Sergeant John M Fitzpatrick, of Bray, giving our Bray Social Support Group advice on crime prevention and awareness.

The group greatly appreciates Garda Fitzpatrick's advice. It's important to keep aware of local updates and general guidelines for staying safe at home.



SOCIAL SUPPORT GROUPS



DUBLIN SOUTH WEST

Our summer day out was to Howth, where we had our meal then all went for a walk together along down to the boats and prom, stopping on the way to buy some fresh fish.

Not everyone managed the walk about but we had a good day and are pleased to share some of the photos from the day.

Pat McCabe - Convenor

CORK EASTER MEETING

The Cork Social Support Group's Easter meeting was held at the Carrigaline Court Hotel on Saturday 19th April 2025. As usual, Evelyn Wainwright and her team had everything organised perfectly.

Gráinne and Karen (Alone) gave us an interesting summary of the work of Alone. However, the talk would have made a greater impact if it had been divided between different topics in order to allow all our members to ask questions on each segment before moving on. Nevertheless, the Alone booklet, provided, is very informative.

We must never lose sight that the main reason for these events is to allow members to meet with old friends and to share experiences.

The snacks provided by the hotel were excellent and the staff were friendly and efficient. *By Declan Long*



KILDARE SOCIAL SUPPORT GROUP

CHAIR YOGA FOR POLIO SURVIVORS

Over the last few weeks, the Kildare Social Support Group took part in a course of "Chair Yoga", and it was well attended. This is what we discovered about Chair Yoga and polio survivors, and I felt I should pass it on to the membership:

Chair Yoga can be a great way for polio survivors to improve flexibility, strength and balance, while minimising strain on the body. Since polio survivors may experience Post Polio Syndrome (PPS), including muscle weakness, fatigue, and joint pain, it's essential to focus on gentle, adaptive movements that support mobility without overexertion

BENEFITS OF CHAIR YOGA FOR POLIO SURVIVORS

- ▮ Improves flexibility without straining muscles
- ▮ Enhances circulation and joint mobility
- ▮ Strengthens core and postural muscles for better stability
- ▮ Reduces stress and promotes relaxation
- ▮ Supports breathing and lung function

GENTLE CHAIR YOGA POSES

1. Seated Neck Stretch – Gently tilt the head side to side to relieve neck tension.
2. Seated Side Stretch – Raise one arm and lean slightly to the opposite side for a spine and ribcage stretch.
3. Seated Spinal Twist – Hold the armrest and gently twist the torso to improve spinal mobility.
4. Seated Leg Lifts – Lift one leg at a time to strengthen the quadriceps.
5. Seated Forward Fold – Bend forward slightly to stretch the lower back and hamstrings.
6. Ankle Rotations – Rotate the ankles to enhance circulation and flexibility.
7. Breathing Exercises (Pranayama) – Deep belly breathing to support lung function and relaxation.

TIPS FOR SAFE PRACTICE

- ▮ Use a sturdy chair with back support and armrests if needed.
- ▮ Move slowly and mindfully to avoid muscle fatigue.
- ▮ Avoid overexertion – Listen to your body and rest when needed.
- ▮ Modify movements as necessary to accommodate strength and mobility levels.
- ▮ Practice regularly for gradual improvement in strength and flexibility.

Peter Barron, Kildare SSG - PS: Also, with so many attending, it made the group stronger and unified for the future.

NOTICE BOARD

Scam Alert

By Leo Brown

From phone calls to emails, scammers are using increasingly sophisticated tactics to target people over 50, tricking them into investing in fake schemes or ventures. These fraudsters hide behind counterfeit websites and false identities, building a false sense of trust with their victims. Once a payment has been made, the scammers will quickly transfer the money into numerous accounts and block the consumer, making it nearly impossible to retrieve.

FraudSMART is an awareness initiative developed by the Banking & Payments Federation Ireland aimed at educating people on the threat of scams and providing advice on how to prevent them.



FraudSMART has outlined red flags to look out for:

- ▶ Cold Call: You receive an unexpected telephone call/email/social media message about a potential investment opportunity.
- ▶ Claims of low or no risk: There is a promise of guaranteed, quick, and profitable return on the investment with little to no risk. Often too good to be true. Many investments carry some level of risk.
- ▶ Pressure to act: You feel pressured into acting quickly without proper research or due diligence.
- ▶ Lack of Transparency: You cannot access clear and detailed information about the operations, financials, or investment strategy.
- ▶ Complexity and confusion: the investment is overly complex and difficult to understand.

To avoid a potential investment scam, make sure you spend the proper time researching and verifying the information.

Although a brochure or website may look legitimate, check the individual and firm's qualifications, credentials, reputation, and history. Along with this, consult a trusted third party such as a legal/financial professional and consult family and close friends.

To learn more about the risk of scams, visit www.fraudsmart.ie.



NOTICE BOARD

WE ACT

By Leo Brown

In recent years, public trust in the nonprofit sector has declined sharply, according to a report by Independent Sector. A series of scandals and cases of mismanagement has contributed to an increase in skepticism, resulting in reduced donations and funding for many charities.

WeAct is a campaign aimed at promoting the nonprofit sector. Initially launched amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, WeAct harnesses the power of storytelling to showcase the real-world impact of charities. By sharing personal stories of

those impacted by nonprofits, it shows the impact they have on the community.

A recent WeAct study revealed that most people don't believe charities benefit them personally—seeing them as aimed at “other groups.” The WeAct Campaign wants to shift this thinking, emphasising that charity work can support anyone, across a range of areas including poverty relief, health and wellness, education, and more.

In doing so, WeAct underscores that the nonprofit sector plays a vital role in crafting a community-shaped world.



Congratulations



Congratulations to Ruth Martin, daughter of the late Edwin Bailey, who took part in the Great Limerick Run to raise money for Polio Survivors Ireland. Ruth raised a whopping €1,565 in memory of her late father.

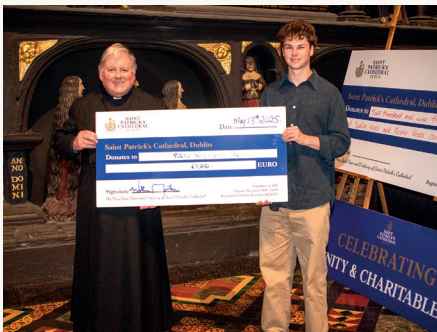
Edwin was known to many of you as a Convenor our Clare Social Support Group. He was a talented photographer and poet and often his work was featured in this magazine. Huge thanks to Ruth's family and friends who donated to support her and to all of our members who also donated. *What a wonderful testament to Edwin.*



FUNDRAISING NEWS

Saint Patrick's Cathedral

On 13 May, we were honoured to attend Saint Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin for a special service and cheque presentation. Through their 'light a candle and make a donation' initiative, the Cathedral has generously distributed €201,612.43 to charitable causes over the past two years.



We are extremely grateful to have received a €1,250 donation, which will play a vital role in our efforts to continue to support polio survivors across Ireland.



A massive thank you to Saint Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin for hosting this wonderful event!



Bank of Ireland Begin Together Fund

We were delighted to be in receipt of a donation from the Bank of Ireland, as nominated by a member's family, working in the bank. Huge thanks to Suzanne Scott, daughter of Alan, for securing us a fabulous donation of €500 from BOI's Begin Together fund. We are very grateful to be supported by friends and family in this way.

FUNDRAISING NEWS

Survivor Sweepstakes Spring Draw Results

Winners of our Spring Survivor Sweepstakes Draw winners were announced at the end of the EGM on Friday 11th April.

There was no winner of the €1,000 prize as no one matched the 4 numbers.

The four numbers drawn were 1, 9, 16 and 25.
No-one matched four numbers on this occasion.

We ran our €50 lucky dip and the winners were Felicity McGinley, Patrick Gaffney and Brian Clogher.

Congratulations to these €50 winners.

We are very grateful to all our entrants for their support. This draw continues to be an important source of fundraising income for us.

You can check this link for Match 4 proof:
<https://www.randomresult.com/ticket.php?t=3911918F3QQCEZSE8>

You can check the €50 lucky dip winners' link here:
<https://www.randomresult.com/ticket.php?t=3911920MV7U5GSURD>

The draw was witnessed by Lee O'Brien, Carmichael Ireland.

Our next draw is with this issue.

FUNDRAISING NEWS

Survivor Sweepstakes Autumn 2025 Members Draw



Pay €5 for 1 row, or €10 for 3 rows
€1,000 Prize - if 4 numbers are matched
PLUS 3 chances to win €50

Our autumn draw gives YOU the opportunity to win cash and raise vital funds for polio survivors. Thank you for your support so far.

We are very grateful to members who support us when they can.

We are enclosing **two** entry envelopes in case you wish to ask family or friends to enter. There is however, no obligation.

Pick 4 numbers from 1 to 25 inclusive

Cost €5 for 1 row, or €10 for 3 rows to be placed in draw envelope
 Make sure you pick 4 different numbers in each row.

| | | | |
|---|----|----|----|
| 2 | 4 | 9 | 24 |
| 1 | 16 | 18 | 25 |
| 2 | 5 | 10 | 11 |

You can request more envelopes if you wish to increase your chances!

Please return entries by Friday 29th August 2025

– and make sure to provide a phone number (or address), so we can contact you if you win.

We will endeavour to run the draw and announce the winners at the EGM.

Permit granted by:
 Supt., Jonathan O'Brien,
 Bridewell Garda Station.

Match 4 numbers to win €1,000 plus 3 Lucky Dips of €50

All funds raised go directly to supporting polio survivors. If you are interested in additional entry envelopes to sell, please contact Emma at 01 8898920. **Please note: there is no obligation to enter, but if you are able to do so, we wish you the best of luck!**

Terms & Conditions on page 30

R.I.P. Polio Survivors Ireland was saddened to hear of the passing of these members recently:

Douglas Barry, Sheila Champ, Larry Delahunty, Joseph Flynn, Piers Gardiner, Pat Ingoldsby, Rosemary Lennon, Ellen Murphy, Stanislaus Joseph O'Reilly, Michael Healy.

We acknowledge the contribution these members have made to the work of Polio Survivors Ireland – our thoughts are with their family and friends.

Are you a member of a Credit Union?

Sometimes members nominate us to receive donations from their local Credit Union.



If you are a member of a CU, and willing to submit a letter seeking support, please contact us on 01 889 8920.

We will send you a letter to sign and send in.



YOUR FEEDBACK- Your opinion counts! Polio Survivors Ireland is your charity, your support organisation, your service and we are always eager to hear your ideas on how we can improve our services and supports and our organisation! You don't have to wait until a conference or meeting to feedback information, opinion, or tell us about your experiences that might help us to help you. Feel free to contact Nicola Fogarty at ceo@polio.ie or on 01 889 89 20.

If you have any suggestions or contributions to make to the Survivor Magazine, please contact Emma on cdo@polio.ie or call the office. It is your magazine and we want to hear from you.

Survivor Sweepstakes TERMS & CONDITIONS:

Subject to change. Name and phone or email must be included or prize is redrawn. Where a number is repeated on a row, or a number entered outside 1 – 25, then next consecutive number will be entered. Numbers drawn using www.randomresult.com – winning numbers can be checked each draw by using an assigned ticket number, to be advertised on www.polio.ie and in The Survivor magazine. Judges' decision is final.



CARING FOR YOUR MOBILITY SINCE 1999

PRIVATE & GRANT WORK SPECIALISTS

WWW.IRISHSTAIRLIFTS.IE



STAIRLIFTS



THROUGH FLOOR LIFTS



LEVEL ACCESS SHOWERS



RAMPS & RAILS



LIGHTWEIGHT POWERCHAIR



MOBILITY SCOOTERS

**WHEELCHAIRS
POWERCHAIRS
ROLLATORS
& MORE**

**UNIT C5/C6 CLANE BUSINESS PARK,
CLANE, CO. KILDARE
W91NF86**

**CALL US TODAY FOR FREE ADVICE
AND QUOTATION !**

045 892696 / 01 6167079

Locall: 0818 818500