

VSS NEWS

Volunteer Stroke Scheme

Issue 6 May 1991

Ann Kavanagh's Review

It was my duty and honour to welcome the President of Ireland, Mary Robinson, to our VSS Northside Club, on the 8th of April, 1991.

A lot of important things have happened since the AGM last year. I will try to mention just a few



We set up our first VSS Pilot Scheme seven years ago in 1984. Under the guidance of speech-therapists and those of the medical profession we have expanded, with two stroke clubs in Dublin, one in North Dublin and one in South Dublin. We also provide Relative Support Groups, Patient Support Groups and a counselling service.

Stroke has a devastating impact not only on the victim, but also on the families and friends and it is to this end that the psychological and practical support given by the VSS is so vital. Erica O'Mara has recently set up a support group for young people, aged 14-22 years, who have a parent a stroke victim.

There are also home visits by our trained volunteers who now cater for approximately eighty patients. These visits are done under the guidance of the speech-therapists. In addition requests for advice, and assistance in establishing new schemes have been received from around the country - in such cases we have given advice on setting up schemes and have provided training for their supervisors. I know all my friends who have had a stroke and their families join me in thanking all our volunteers for their hard work and dedication. Volunteers are the back-bone of

our organization. We simply would not function without them, also our volunteer drivers, committee members, and the directors of VSS who administer the organization on a voluntary basis.

There is so much the VSS could do but at the same time only so much we can do. There are so many people asking for our help and support, we would dearly love to help everyone. Hopefully we may get extra funding this year. We get £12,000 a year from the Eastern Health Board for which we are extremely grateful. We are actively pursuing other avenues for funding.

I would like to thank all those who have helped us in the past. No matter how small a donation we get we are delighted with it.

I would like to wish all our friends and readers a lovely summer and all they would wish themselves for the remainder of the year.

Contents

1	Ann Kavanagh's Review
2	Puzzle Page
3	The President Blows out the Candles for the Monday Club
4	Life Beyond the Stroke
5	Dublin North Stroke Club
5	Loving Support
6	Understanding the Individual who has Difficulty with Communication
7	What are the methods available to a non-speaking stroke patient?
7	Solutions to Puzzle Page
8	Dublin South Stroke Club
9	Fun and Games in the Glen of Imaal and at Christmas
10	The Westmeath Stroke Scheme
11	Mayo Stroke Club
11	Excise and VAT on New Cars
12	Patient Progress
14	Money Matters
15	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1991

Puzzle Page

A Food Associations

With which countries are the following foods and drinks associated?

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| 1 Spaghetti | 8 Lager |
| 2 Goulash | 9 Leeks |
| 3 Haggis | 10 Snails |
| 4 Curry | 11 Pizza |
| 5 Coffee | 12 Hamburgers |
| 6 Frankfurter | 13 Port |
| Sausage | 14 Guinness* |
| 7 Vodka | 15 Ouzo |

* Hint on No 14 It is said that the Guinness family have done a lot for the people of Dublin, but not half as much as the people of Dublin have done for the Guinness family!

B Animal Chase 1

How many wild or tame animals can you find in this square?
(There are 25 in all with some there twice).

R	E	I	N	D	E	E	R	O	E
T	L	I	O	N	X	L	A	S	S
I	E	B	E	A	P	K	T	T	G
G	P	C	A	T	T	L	E	A	O
E	H	A	R	E	C	O	W	G	A
R	A	M	P	I	G	O	O	Z	T
M	N	I	U	O	X	N	L	E	I
I	T	N	B	I	C	E	F	B	B
N	O	K	A	P	I	G	N	U	E
E	L	A	N	D	O	G	F	O	X

C Animal Chase 2

Locate the animals in this puzzle:
(They can be found in any direction).

P	F	D	E	E	R	D	O	G
E	I	T	H	O	R	S	E	O
N	S	I	T	I	S	S	L	A
G	H	A	B	C	U	R	E	T
U	C	G	O	O	S	E	P	M
I	G	T	M	W	A	G	H	O
N	A	W	O	L	F	I	A	O
R	R	A	B	B	I	T	N	S
T	U	R	T	L	E	R	T	E

The President Blows out the Candles for the Monday Club's 5th Birthday.

Erica O'Mara
Organizer North Dublin

When I arrived at the Club on Monday 5th of April 1991 there was a most terrific buzz to be felt. Stroke people, drivers and volunteers were coming in at such a rate that I imagined the President having to squeeze her way in. However when everyone was seated it worked very well and at a final count we had 73 present. As guests we had Ann Kavanagh, VSS Chairperson and Theo Davis, Secretary. We also welcomed Heather Breen and Maureen Boyle, VSS Organizers from Northern Ireland, who had travelled down specially for the event, Alderman Sean Haughey called in and we also had Fr. Jack Lynch, P.P. of Kilmore West.

We had arranged the tables in a long horseshoe with a small top table. The tables were set the night before with lilac/white gingham cloths and plain red at the top table. The volunteers had all made cakes and I brought up some USA dip and bowls of crisps. It all looked really well and Bridie Kenneally had made a superb job of the Birthday Cake. I had done flowers for



President Mary Robinson presenting Paul Fitzpatrick with his award for Club Member of the Year North Dublin Stroke Club's 5th Birthday Erica O'Mara, Organiser, seated Ann Kavanagh, Chairperson Beatrice McLoughlin, Driver

the tables, buttonholes for the drivers and volunteers and a large basket of flowers for the hallway.

There were plain-clothes detectives and a uniformed garda inside the Centre and, goodness!, what squad cars and motor bikes outside.

Back to the Club and while the Birthday folk were having a sing-song we were beginning to get count-downs from the Gardaí - "the President will be here at 12 noon, - the President will be here in 12 minutes, - in 7 minutes, - in 4 minutes." We assembled in the hall - Sr. Margaret, Fr. Jack Lynch P.P., Ann, our Chairperson, Tess, our Treasurer, and Chris, one of our drivers. As the President's car pulled up at the door and she got out I had the honour to shake hands with her and I said "Céad Míle Fáilte, you are very welcome to the North Dublin Stroke Club." All was as smooth as you like with the vanishing of the

nerves that had me shaking for the last few hours. I introduced the President to the group in the hall and then we proceeded into the main room.

Once more I welcomed our President on behalf of the Monday and Wednesday Clubs and Tess introduced a number of Club members who spoke briefly. Next I announced our four annual awards which were duly presented by our First Lady.

Trophy number one went to Paul who is 25 and had two strokes ten years ago. He took his trophy and was turning to go when he was asked to stand closer for a photograph. He did so and when the President said to him that they had him embarrassed, he laughed, the camera clicked and the bold Paul kissed her on the cheek. No problem to her, she laughed and, of course, Paul was thrilled skinny.

The next award was for Alan Brown for his courage following the death of his wife, Mary, last December. As Alan is in St Mary's Hospital, his driver/volunteer, Michael Dowling, accepted the award on his behalf. Imelda Gannon and Violet Dykes received the other two awards for their cheerfulness and regular attendance.

Following the awards Vera Crooke, from the Wednesday Club, presented a small dried flower picture which



Welcoming the President to the North Dublin Stroke Club's 5th Birthday 8/4/91 Erica O'Mara Organiser



**President Mary Robinson
Paul Fitzpatrick**

she had made. The President loved it and I was happy that one of the stroke people had made the gift.

Tea and cakes were next on the menu and were all enjoyed. As a finale the Birthday Cake candles were lit and the President blew them out with great encouragement from everyone. In saying a few words she paid tribute to the Monday and Wednesday Clubs and the VSS in general for their spirit of self-support and self-determination and ended with the statement that "I will still be President for your 10th Birthday." We will remember that but above all we will remember our Club's 5th Birthday and our gracious and smiling President who made it all such a fantastic occasion

Life beyond the stroke

by John F.
McLoughlin.



'Twas the third of
November 1988
Which prompts this wee
poem
I'm about to relate.
At first I thought it was
heartburn
But how foolish of me -
'Twas then that I went
To the local G.P.

He examined me and told me
That the only thing for me
Was to have a by-pass
To which I quickly agreed.

So in November off to
Dublin
I went
To the Mater Hospital
For there I was sent.

There were Surgeons and
Doctors
And Nurses quite many

The operation was done
And Mr. Luke said it was a
success
But of that I have
misgivings
For when I woke up later
on
I was barely living

For I was deaf and blind
And could not stand or walk
And worst of all when I
tried to speak
I found I couldn't talk.

So after some weeks there
I was returned to St.
Patrick's in Carrick
I often times felt angry
And filled with indignation
Then my first break came
When I got out for young
John's Confirmation.

Kathleen Power got me
ready that morning
I was dressed in pin-striped
navy blue
And I felt like living again
like I used to do.

I got on fairly well
But my progress was slow
Until I was brought down
To the girls in Physio.
There, Ethel, Patricia and
Mary took me in hand
And not long after that I
was fit to stand.

I often sank down to great
depths
Oh but what a thrill
When I was fit to take my
first steps
I thought I was half-way up
the hill.

So, if at times you're feeling
down
And feel that life's no joke
You must get up, go on,
Don't look back
For I believe there's life
beyond the stroke.

*John McLoughlin, born
14th July, 1923 in
Annaghmore near Mohill,
Co. Leitrim, worked as a
joiner/carpenter and part-
time farmer for most of his
life. He is married to
Kathleen and they have
five children. John always
wrote and had a few poems
published in the local press.
He suffered a stroke in
1988.*



Superquinn give the biscuits - for five years to
North Dublin's Stroke Club.
(Back row left to right) Brendan Murphy, Ray
Clarke Manager, Superquinn Northside, John
Abbesley. (Front row) Bridie Kenneally, Lily
Murphy, all members of North Dublin Stroke Club.

An Update on the Dublin North Stroke Club

Erica O'Mara

The Monday club started with six stroke people, some of whom are still with us as volunteers or drivers. A memory remains with me from the time I was trying to set up the Club. Sr. Margaret, who runs St. Luke's Social Centre, suggested that I talk to the local Ladies' Club. I did so and came away that evening with offers from eleven volunteers - I was staggered. Now five years later nine of those volunteers are still with us - and a greater bunch of volunteers you couldn't get - along with our drivers and other volunteers. Above all they are friends and confidants to all our stroke members.



Our stroke people are out on their own. Their combined spirit and sense of humour are unquenchable. Without doubt it is great to see a newcomer, after a few weeks, come out of his/her shell and take part in our activities and start making new friendships.

As we blow out the five candles we can spare a thought for those of our members who have sadly died during the five years. Memories of them will always be with us.

Since last October we have a Wednesday Club, here in the same premises, St. Luke's Social Centre. Where else would we get the warm welcome Sr. Margaret has for us? At present we have ten members and already the same magical atmosphere and spirit has grown up.

In both Clubs darts are a firm favourite and the Wednesday Club look forward to playing the Southside Club in the near future. We also play the Memory Game with a giant sized pack of cards, which is not alone good for memory and concentration, but the cause of great hilarity.

During our fine summer last year there were many sunny Monday mornings and we took advantage of this by sending out several drivers with some members and volunteers. They went for a drive stopping for a coffee break along the way and really enjoying themselves. "Like normal people out for a drive" as Maggie put it.

Christmas 1990 was a break with tradition for the Club. Almost everyone opted to go out for

Christmas Dinner and to take in a Cabaret as well. The evening was very much enjoyed by all.

Some time ago we had eight students from Mercy College, Coolock to visit the Wednesday Club. They are involved in a schools competition for Disabled Living and were very interested in the discussion we had together. When it came to Liam's turn to talk, he summed up his Club with obvious pride:

"You may have wondered if you were passing by, if anything went on in here, but we're here and it's a good place to be, and now you know and you can tell everyone."

Yes, Liam - Club is a good place to be - for all of us.

Loving Support - Help along the Way

Jack Lawlor, Clontarf

As I walked out to the waiting ambulance on Whit Monday 1989, little did I realize what a change would take place in my life. I had no inkling of what a stroke could do. When we arrived at Beaumont, I was wheeled into casualty. After approximately three hours I slipped away in a coma. I woke up in the ward some days later with a drip fastened to my arm, mute and unable to move my right arm and leg. Then I knew what a stroke could do. I could say goodbye to my social and charitable activities; goodbye to the dancing I loved.

I remember little about the early days of the stroke. I could understand everything but was unable to communicate. I remember, in particular, trying to make my wife understand how to deal with my State pension. I always dealt with our finances and knew that she would be lost. Another thing I remember was the X-ray room where I saw the inside of my head and the place the blood vessel had burst.

I was in a semi-private room in the hospital but as I learned later that was a mistake. It would have been better for me to be in a public ward where I would, at least, hear conversations. After about four weeks I began to make intelligible sounds and was

receiving physiotherapy and speech therapy. I was then transferred to the Mater Private Hospital; another mistake - there was no resident speech-therapist. After my discharge from hospital in September 1989, I went home to my wife. Like all carers, she received no training in looking after me, she had no idea of the type of person I had become. It was like living with a stranger. From being an extrovert I became an introvert. From a good conversationalist I had become capable of being silent all day and prone to uncontrollable tears. The tears embarrassed me because there was no reason for them. I could not decide things for myself at this stage.

After this time we heard about the Volunteer Stroke Scheme and we decided to join it. That was the best thing we could have done. Erica O'Mara came to us and she left some booklets about strokes. She told us about the Stroke Club and I decided I should join just as soon as I could get a driver. Erica got a volunteer named Maura Leahy to call to me for speech-therapy. The Club was a great success. All knew what each had been through and all had a positive outlook. The voluntary helpers are marvellous and make the Club a happy place.

My greatest desire is to become reasonably well again and to drive a car. I would go into hospitals and help others as I was helped. I have started again to do some work for the Hearing Impaired in Beechpark. I hope to dance again, even if it is Rock 'n' Roll and not Sequence Dancing, which I love.

I could not close this count without a special tribute to the one who helped me remake my life - my devoted wife who has seen her dreams shattered when we both had time to enjoy ourselves and for living with me still. I must also pay tribute to my daughter and son-in-law, Margaret and Martin, both directors of Irish Health Culture Association for encouraging me at all times; for strict attention to my diet, for KI Massage Therapy and for Healing Therapy. Surely God will repay them - I can't.

Jack Lawlor is aged around 70. He has come a long way since his stroke. He is happily married to Rose and really he owes her a lot in patience and understanding.



Understanding the Individual who has Difficulty with Communication

Gina O'Donohue
Principal II
Speech Therapist
St James's Hospital



I am involved as a speech Therapist on a professional basis with the Volunteer Stroke Scheme. It has been a highly rewarding and excellent learning experience for me.

My clients suffer from varying degrees of speech and language disorders. Referral to the VSS Scheme enables the clients and their carers to benefit from more long-term and on-going support provided by volunteers, which cannot often be provided by the speech therapy department.

The success of the VSS lies in their approach to the client and their carers' needs, helping them integrate back into their home environment and community from the protected hospital setting. The fear which often surrounds the word "discharge" for the stroke client and their families is greatly reduced.

Newton writing in 1977 described speech and language behaviours as being the "most complex of all human behaviours. Virtually every function of the central nervous system is involved in speech and language."

Indeed, a speech disorder, apart from its severity, can have a devastating effect on those affected and their family and friends. An immediate feeling of isolation is replaced by frustration and often depression as the reality of living in a "world without words" is confirmed. I wish to focus on one specific speech and language disorder which can occur following a stroke, that is the complete loss of speech, or Aphasia. Spoken language is not the only form of communication, but it is the most natural method.

Many of the clients that a speech therapist treats have severe speech loss. These clients will be a priority group who will be referred to the VSS and the speech therapist on discharge from hospital.

Their ability to communicate must be the key issue. The focus may shift from speech to other forms of communication. Understanding this area is vital to carers of stroke victims.

The areas of augmentative and alternative communicative (ACC) must be explored fully for our non-speaking population. Everyone uses ACC strategies. Indeed our own speech is regularly supplemented by facial expression, body orientation gestures, mime and writing. "Body language" has become a bit of a buzz word to describe communication which everybody uses but which is crucially important to the stroke person suffering from temporary loss of speech.

What are the methods available to a non-speaking stroke patient?

Firstly it is important to emphasise that each case is different and must be treated individually. The aim is ultimately, that individuals can communicate their needs and feelings to others.

1 The importance of exploring a person's own natural gesture system is the first step.

2 Adequate comprehension of spoken speech, and the use of one had, aid for the majority of ACC devices.

3 If a client has retained the ability to understand the written word, he/she can use tailor-made communication boards, with abstract and concrete pictures, words and short sentences. Pure pictorial charts for non-readers are made.

4 Spelling boards with alphabets can supplement these individually made charts if the ability to spell is retained.

5 Use of symbols, more abstract pictures and bliss symbolics can be appropriate, depending on the abilities of the individual.

6 More complicated gestural and/or sign systems can be implemented but need adequate dexterity.

7 The Canon Communicator is a portable battery powered device which requires intact spelling ability and a fine finger manipulation to depress the required key (similar to a typewriter). Print-out features and memory store facility are present.

8 More sophisticated communication aids include:-

a Introtalker. This is a basic portable battery powered speech output

communication device for non-speaking people. Limited function device offering only speech output with a limited vocabulary. It employs digitized speech (pre-recorded human speech) which results in natural sounding speech.

b Touch Talker and Light Talker

These use computer technology to enable the user to store information of his/her own choice to recall at will. Messages are stored by means of pictures and activated by touch in the Touch Talker and by a light sensor or control switch in Light Talker.

These are just a few of the devices/systems available to supplement the impaired speakers communicative ability. It is important to emphasise that many people who have suffered a stroke will not have the ability to use such devices. The speech therapist will always assess and make suitable recommendations. Research in the area of new electronic devices is very active and holds out great hopes.

The many alternatives open to the "non-speaking" population enables us to focus on "communicative effectiveness" rather than speech in isolation. The temporary loss of words need not mean the end of communication.

Solutions to Puzzle Page

A Food associations

1 Italy; 2 Hungary; 3 Scotland; 4 India; 5 Brazil; 6 Germany; 7 Russia; 8 Denmark; 9 Wales; 10 France; 11 Italy; 12 U.S.A.; 13 Portugal; 14 Ireland; 15 Greece.

B Animal Chase 1

Ass; Bear; Cat; Cattle; Cow; Deer; Dog; Elk; Fox; Goat; Hare; Lion; Mice; Ox (2); Elephant; Pig (2); Gnu; Puma; Ram; Rat; Reindeer; Roe; Stag; Tiger; Wolf

C Animal Chase 2

Bird; Cat; Cow; Deer; Dog; Elephant; Fish; Goat; Goose; Horse; Mouse; Penguin; Rabbit; Rat; Tiger; Turtle; Wolf

Dublin

South

Stroke

Club

Marie O'Brien
Supervisor,
South Dublin



VSS South Dublin has had a very busy year. Our club has acquired a permanent premises. Many thanks to Helen Lee and the Mount Street Club for all their help while working with them. We now run our club from Mount Argus Community Centre, Lower Kimmage Road.

We opened in September 1990 and christened our new club with a day trip to the Glen of Imaal, Co. Wicklow. The day was a great success assisted by the warm welcome afforded us in Fentons, Glen of Imaal Lounge.

Denis, our club musician and singer, kept the ball rolling and the music flowing with lots of help from Michael, Jimmy and a hearty chorus. Michael Ryder tells all the secrets of this outing elsewhere in VSS news.

Our next big venture was our Christmas party. Thanks to Niamh Landy and her chef, Oliver, a full Christmas dinner was enjoyed by all. Despite a slight problem with electricity Oliver managed with the kind assistance of our friendly next-door chip

shop 'Borza' to get the meal on the table on time. Once again Denis got the party off to a lively start. The next two hours produced a varied selection of talent from both club members and volunteers alike. Singing, dancing and comedy turns all helped to create the Christmas spirit!

A trip to The Square, Tallaght, which was held in March 1991, proved a great success.

Future treats include:

- * A welcome visit from our Coolock Wednesday club for a friendly darts match.
- * A return visit to Glendalough.
- * A return visit to the Glen of Imaal

Thanks to the Eastern Health Board we had a six week course entitled "Take Care of Yourself" which was given by Catherine McCann, physiotherapist. This course was open to relatives and club members alike.

We now have fortnightly Physiotherapy sessions with our resident physiotherapist, Fiona Nangle MSCP. These invaluable sessions have proven very popular with our members.

Club activities include darts, bingo, cards, quizzes, slide-shows, talks from interesting visitors from time to time, beetle-drives, dominoes, and sing-songs.

Our latest addition has been an 'art table' where we hope soon to discover a Picasso or a Rembrandt.

Our numbers are growing weekly with several of those we meet on our home visits also becoming club members.

Many thanks to Sister Una for her warm welcome to our new premises, also many thanks to all our volunteers and drivers for their hard work and dedication throughout the last year.

Many thanks to all who contributed towards our many ventures throughout the year.

Fun and Games in the Glen of Imaal

and at Christmas

Michael N Ryder

The morning of September 27th 1990 dawned bright and clear, what was so special about September 27th? - I'll tell you what was special about it.

It was the day the Dublin South Volunteer Stroke Club had its first outing. We set off from the Club to the Glen of Imaal. Before the Coach reached Blessington we had sung ourselves hoarse with the help of Des on the accordion. We sang all the Pop songs, Folk songs, and Ballads of today and yesterday. Jimmy Kelly, a club member, excelled himself on the mouth organ - playing everything from Mise Eire to Katie Daly and Dickey Reilly. "The Fields of Athenry" will never be the same! We finally arrived at



South Dublin Club Trip
Glen of Imaal

Fentons, Imaal Inn, where we were welcomed with open arms.

The hospitality of the Fenton family is something the members will hold dear and cherish. When we finished lunch in Fentons which was supervised by Marie and by Kate, one of our many volunteers, we had a really good knees-up, with everybody doing his or her party piece.

One of our lady members (who shall be nameless) showed us all that she was a dab hand at doing the Twist and the Birdy dance. In the midst of all this we could see and hear the army going on manoeuvres. Finally it came time to head for home. The singing may not have been as good coming home but who cared? - everyone was happy. It was a super day, a day to remember, and many

thanks to Marie, our club supervisor and all our volunteers who made it so.

Our Annual Christmas Dinner was held on December 19th 1990.

There were twenty members present and some very special guests. We had a *really* good meal which was enjoyed by all present. When the meal was finished we had some first class entertainment.

Des, our accordion player who gives his time voluntarily, kicked off with a few tunes to get us going - many thanks to Des. Jimmy Kelly one of our members gave us a few bars on the mouth organ. The great thing was that all our members and guests got into the swing of things.

The two *pieces de resistance* were Mairéad and Fiona. Mairéad, our volunteer, played the guitar, sang and danced a reel, jig and hornpipe (not altogether I might add!). The next was Fiona, our Physiotherapist, who sang in dulcet tones "The Town I Love So Well" - no prizes for guessing where Fiona comes from!

Michael, as ever, could not be quiet and was only short of standing on his hands. The other volunteer Michael also sang to his heart's content. The evening closed with everybody getting a present from Santa Claus.

Our thanks to Sister Una who gave us the use of the premises, to Gina O'Donovan, Speech Therapist, Theo Davis, Secretary VSS, our many volunteers and a special thank you to Marie our Club Supervisor.

Well done all!

Michael Ryder is himself a stroke victim.

South Dublin Club Trip
Glen of Imaal
September 1990



The Westmeath Stroke Scheme

Getting started

Great events have simple beginnings, so it is with Westmeath Stroke Scheme. At a Social Services Association meeting held in Mullingar in October 1986 four ladies from Ballinafid expressed a wish that consideration be given to special people in our community - people who suffer from strokes.

After much discussion, it was decided to set up Westmeath Stroke Scheme. Its aim was to help people suffering from a stroke condition, especially from a social point of view, by regular visiting, chatting and generally encouraging stroke people to take that little step forward along the road to recovery.

The Scheme was launched in June 1987. It was some little time before it started to function properly but when Mrs Kathleen Farrell, Kinnegad, was appointed organiser things began to move and fall into place. Visiting patients in their homes is top priority and selecting volunteers to visit them on a weekly basis is of the utmost importance. When Kathleen retired in January 1990, Mary Mahon, Ballymore, took over her role. Starting with one patient the scheme has now grown to over 80 on our list.

Fun and Games

Two functions are organised by the scheme during the year - our Christmas party and a summer get-together. To these all patients and volunteers are invited and all have great fun together - dancing, chatting and partaking of refreshments. These functions are

financed by the Annual Dance in October and the Church gate collection in January. No grant or financial aid comes from the Midland Health Board but such help is urgently needed for expansion.

The Two Clubs

Two Stroke Clubs were set up by the scheme, one in Athlone and one in Mullingar. These clubs operate on a monthly basis, Athlone on the first Tuesday, from 2.30 to 4.30 pm and Mullingar on the fourth Tuesday, also from 2.30 to 4.30 pm. They are open to all stroke patients who would like to come along. The club provides an opportunity for patients to chat together, to get to know one another and to have a little bit of fun and a cup of tea. If interested contact:

Athlone:

Chairman: Billy Dunne Ph: 0902-92004
Secretary: Nuala O'Brien Ph: 0902-75887

Mullingar:

Chairman: Frank Bolger Ph: 044-42068
Secretary: Mary Mahon Ph: 044-43057

Contacts on Committee

Westmeath Stroke Scheme is controlled and operated by a voluntary committee which dedicates its time and

thoughts to the well-being of stroke patients and their families in Co. Westmeath.

The Committee:

Chair: Jim Kincaid Ph: 044-40960
Vice-Chair: Anne Small Ph: 044-55146
Secretary: Martha Foley Ph: 044-74186
Treasurer: Mary Foley Ph: 044-64130
P.R.O.: Catherine Rutledge Ph: 044-42366

Mary Mahon, Margaret Lambden, Frank Bolger, Billy Dunne, Maura Meehan, Mary Dunne, Nora Duffy, Sean McKeogh.

The Committee would be delighted to help stroke patients or their families at any time, so don't be shy in asking. So too would our very hard working and dedicated organiser Mrs Mary Mahon, Ballymore, 044-56216. Please contact her if you need any information, help or advice.

Watch out also for the monthly Westmeath Stroke Scheme notes in the local paper which keep you informed of what is going on.

This article is adapted from News Sheet No 1 of the Westmeath Stroke Scheme. The energy and activity of this group sets a headline for the whole of Ireland.



Jim Kincaid

Mayo Stroke Club

Colette McGinty
Chairperson Mayo Stroke Club
c/o County Clinic
Castlebar
Co Mayo
Telephone 094-22333

The Mayo Stoke Club was founded in 1985 with the aim of providing a social outlet for stroke victim, their families and friends.

We have approximately 75 members and of those about 30 attend regularly. Others attend occasionally when they can but some find it very difficult due to transport difficulties or distance factors.

Our meetings are varied, ranging from Bingo to Table Quizzes and Irish Nights. We always have a raffle and a cup of tea (or something stronger!). We have no membership fee but donations are welcome each night. These and our raffle keep us self-sufficient. Frank Gannon, our Treasurer, keeps a steady hold on our purse strings. Betty, our Catering Manager, provides lovely biscuits and sandwiches. Joe Murphy is our Musical Director, he usually rustles up some local talent to entertain us while we dance the night away.

We were fortunate to receive a donation from our local Rotary Club which funded our first (and hopefully, annual) summer outing last year. We headed off to Westport, had a lovely meal and a stroll around Westport House and Gardens. It was a very successful and enjoyable day.

Our Club is held together by a hard-working committee consisting of Speech Therapists, Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists and Stroke Victims. Our President is our Consultant Geriatrician. We all look out for new members who are very welcome. No pressure is put on anyone to attend, but most first-time visitors become hooked.

Recently, we lost two valuable members - a committee member who moved to Wexford and hopes to pioneer a Stroke Club there and Canon Vaughan, a lovely, gentle man who died recently, R.I.P.

Recently we acquired some headed notepaper, which has a very impressive logo in the corner (thanks to Frank and Bruce!).

This year we hope to improve our transport facilities in conjunction with Castlebar Social Services Council, organize another summer outing, and produce a newsletter to keep in touch with our members in the more remote parts of County Mayo.

All in all, a busy year ahead!

Excise and VAT on New Cars

Knowing the Ropes

John L'Estrange



In 1982 I qualified as a disabled driver following long and careful re-learning of all the driving skills and certification by the local doctor. I had also to be passed by the local Gardaí and, believe it or not, by the Revenue Commissioners. The acceptance by the Revenue Commissioners of my new status meant that I was refunded the Excise Duty and VAT on new cars which I bought in 1982 and 1985. The money involved is quite substantial - a £10,000 car today (before any adaptations for the disabled driver) would have a VAT charge of £2,020 and Excise of around £2,000.

In 1988 I bought another new car. This time I got a refund of the VAT only. I appealed against this decision but this was rejected even though I went to the Disabled Drivers' Association and to the local T.D. However, some time later new regulations came into operation - but only for cars purchased on or after 24 May 1989.

The detailed regulations for refund of VAT and Excise Duty are set out in the Disabled Drivers (Tax Concessions) Regulations, 1989 - S.I. (Statutory Instrument) No 340 of 1989 and in Notice No 1851 of the Revenue Commissioners with the lengthy title:

"Reliefs from excise duty and VAT on vehicles, petrol and diesel, used by severely and permanently disabled persons as drivers or passengers".

Notice No 1851 also contains an Application Form for the Revenue refunds. A separate application must be made to the local Motor Tax Office for refund of motor tax.

If you are applying for the first time you should get the detailed seven-page Notice No 1851 from the Revenue Commissioners at:

Division 3
Office of the Revenue Commissioners
14-16 Lord Edward Street
Dublin 2

If you like to read all the legal small print as well S.I. No 340 of 1989 can be purchased from:

The Government Publications Sale Office
Sun Alliance House
Molesworth Street
Dublin 2

Separate forms will be supplied by the Revenue Commissioners for vehicle and petrol/diesel refunds. A medical certificate is required from the Director of Community Care and Medical Officer in the Local Health Board - if this is refused for any reason there is provision for an appeal to the Disabled Drivers Board of Appeal. A certificate is also needed from the local Gardaí about adaptations to the vehicle.

Generally a vehicle purchased with relief from VAT and excise duty must be kept for at least two years.

My own car purchased in 1988 unfortunately missed the refund bus by some months.

Very many stroke persons recover so well that they can resume driving an ordinary car. For those who do not, the Revenue reliefs are a boon whether we get a specially adapted car to drive ourselves or have a car specially adapted so that we can be driven by someone else.

As someone who has been through the mill of the Revenue documents I shall be more than pleased to talk to any colleagues who wish to apply themselves. At first sight the rules may appear formidable but they are not really too intimidating and the refunds are worthwhile if you qualify.

Patient Progress

Liam Mac Colla

Another September



I awoke as usual about 8 o'clock on the morning of 1st September 1989. On trying to put my feet on the floor a curious

feeling of weakness came over me. I tried to stand up but could not and fell back on the bed.

I felt slightly dizzy and found it difficult to move my left hand. I felt no pain and my mind was quite clear. I knew something was wrong and called for my daughter who fortunately had not yet gone out to work.

I remember with absolute clarity being brought to the hospital in the ambulance and my examination by doctors in casualty and my transfer to the hospital ward. There was no pain and my only feeling was apprehension.

It was established quickly that the stroke had hit my left side, partially paralysing leg and hand. I had lost my swallow and voice and was only able to speak in the merest whisper.

I was put on a drip - a most awkward piece of equipment which makes sleeping, moving and resting difficult. An operation was soon performed and stuff called Teflon was used to try and improve my voice and swallow. It succeeded as far as the voice was concerned, and I could talk, albeit hoarsely. It failed however to do anything for my swallow.

My disappointment was allayed by prayer and the encouragement of my daughter principally and other relations and friends, especially my A.A. friends, who regularly called to read and do X-words. The installation of a TV helped also. I did not allow myself to despair, though sorely tempted.

Over the Top

After a little while the doctors decided to try and encourage swallowing by getting me to try to swallow, first teaspoonfuls of warm sweet water, then tea and then custard. It progressed well for a few days, but then I gagged and vomited and got very sick. I developed pneumonia and was given 2/3 days to live. Fortunately I was not told this. I recovered.

Further operations were then performed. One of these was the first of its kind ever. It installed a tube down the left side of my neck to my stomach through I could be fed intravenously more easily the milk food Liquisor B - six bottles of which per day, at a cost of £56 a week, were necessary. This new feeding method, being the first of its kind ever tried, led to me being shown off to a large number of doctors who questioned me closely about how it was working out and affecting me. For me its main benefits were:

- (a) It did away with the cumbersome drip equipment.
- (b) I could move, rest and sleep more easily and read and view TV with less trouble.
- (c) Any lay person could easily feed me so I might be allowed home sooner.

A further operation was performed to bring back the swallow but again it failed. The doctors said it might return anytime, but no further surgery was advised. This was a bitter disappointment, but somehow I got God's help to bear it. Anyway I had now started on physiotherapy to teach me to walk etc. again, and this kept me from brooding too much.

At the beginning of this physiotherapy I had to be

moved to and fro on a wheelchair, but could have the luxury of a shower or bath (with an attendant's help of course).

Home for Christmas

The great day came when I was discharged from hospital just a week before Christmas. I was so overjoyed I cried. My daughter and son-in-law had gone to great lengths to do up my bed and bathroom and were by now well able to feed me.

The first of the struggle for rehabilitation was over. Christmas was great, except that I watched others eat and drink with envy, while I had to do with my tube feeding. The turkey and plum pudding was never missed so much.

The main effort now was to get in as much physiotherapy as possible and aim at being able to walk as soon as possible. I also had to gradually practice swallowing. I had three sessions of physiotherapy a week, being taken to and from the hospital in an ambulance. The physiotherapy was torture, but the instructors were very patient. The biggest enemy was depression and the constant severe pain in the left-hand side of my face (which I still have)

Diary Entries

I found that the best way to deal with depression was, first of all, to keep myself busy. I started keeping two diaries - one in which I record the events of the day, including progress made, if any; the other in which I listed items to be done or attended to the following day. I wrote up this second diary every

those not done.

These diaries also help improve my writing as the stroke had affected my writing hand. Anyway, God knows, my writing could do with improving.

In addition I started to teach myself German and typing and made out Irish lessons for my grandchildren who have exams to do. I also read a lot and have a television, of course.

The pain in the face is constant, and beyond giving me pain killers which reduce the pain for a short while, the doctors cannot help. They say it may go itself eventually. I prefer to think of it as something I have to accept.

Progress on all fronts

I have made some progress. I have graduated from the wheel chair to a frame, then to a crutch and I can now walk with a stick - albeit wobbly. I can manage steps and go to Sunday Mass.

I practice walking every day and perhaps soon I may be able to do a little gardening which I love. The best progress of all was when my swallow returned in two months and they were able to cease feeding through the tube in my mouth. I have been eating almost normally since. I have never enjoyed a meal as much as the first one I had on that occasion - Irish Stew!

I am having a shower unit put in downstairs which will be a great boon. I can eat well and really life is not so bad now as it was a year ago. I cannot however allow any slackening in my efforts.

evening (and still do) and listing the items done, and carrying forward to the next day. I am fortunate too to have such constant aid and encouragement which my daughter and son-in-law provide so generously.

I hope shortly to start going to A.A. meetings once again.

I have always drawn much strength from the members and I keep their Serenity Prayer constantly in mind. It is as follows:

*"God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I
cannot change, to change
the things I can and the
wisdom to know the
difference."*

Liam Mac Colla is 72 years of age. He was born in Fermoy, Co. Cork. He joined the Civil Service in 1937 and has lived in Dublin ever since. He retired in 1981. He is a strong supporter of the VSS and last year he prepared the "Questions" for VSS News with Helen Lee.

Money Matters

John L'Estrange Reports

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We have lots of good news on the financial front:

1 The Eastern Health Board gave us £12,000 for 1990 for which we express our grateful thanks.

2 A wide range of commercial firms helped us once again, e.g. banks, building societies, insurance companies, travel agents, manufacturing firms and retail outlets. The main companies who helped us are listed below in alphabetical order:

Abbot Laboratories  
Aer Rianta  
Allied Irish Banks  
Antigen Pharmaceuticals  
Arnotts  
B&I Line  
Bank of Ireland  
Becton Dickinson  
Burmah-Castrol  
Bus Eireann  
Calor Kosangas  
Ciba-Geigy  
Clerys  
Dunnes Stores  
E.S.B.  
Educational Building Society  
F.I.I.  
Fitzwilton  
Flo Gas  
Gallagher  
General Accident  
General Motor Distribution  
Glaxo  
Guinness  
Inter City Irish Rail  
Irish Cement  
Irish Civil Service Building Society  
Irish Life  
Irish Permanent Building Society  
Jet Petroleum Products  
Jones Oil (given by Ita Reid Smith)  
Marks and Spencers  
New Ireland Assurance  
P.M.P.A.  
Priority Assurance  
Roches Stores  
Sealink  
Smurfits  
Squibb  
Ulster Bank  
Our thanks are due to all these firms who answered our appeal. It is great to get the money but we are also greatly encouraged by the wide moral support that VSS gets from so many prominent firms.

3 We also acknowledge the proceeds of a variety of fund raising events organised by members of the VSS Committee and their colleagues and friends. Kate Kavanagh's Bring and Buy Morning Sale at the Knox Hall, Monkstown, in May 1990. We were indebted to Mrs Elizabeth

Treacy for getting the hall for us and to the Rev Kevin Dalton for all his encouragement and support. Our thanks are due to our supervisor in the South Club, Maeve O'Brien and to Joan Monahan, Michael Ryder, John L'Estrange and many more for their generous time and effort. The Parish Committee must be thanked for taking care of the teas during the day.

A gala bridge drive was held on the 7th of October, 1990 in the Victor Hotel, Rochestown Avenue, Dun Laoghaire. The tournament directors were Maurice O'Connor and Jim Nolan. Prizes galore. A highlight of the evening was a watercolour presented by the artist Sinead Bradley, which was auctioned.

A table quiz was held in Belfield, U.C.D., on the 28th of November. It was organized by a Committee which included Anne Kelliher, Pierce Colbert, and Art Cosgrove.

1st prize The Mathematicians  
2nd prize Ascetics  
Selected

Two paintings presented by Maureen Belton and Gay Buggy drew brisk bidding at auction.

Erica O'Mara, supervisor for North Dublin had a Church Gate collection in her own parish in March 1991. This was the first time that such a collection was held in Dublin and a wonderful success it was. This achievement was acknowledged with a letter of thanks by the North Club to the Priests of the Parish.

We are all familiar with the expression "that takes the biscuit." Well for the past five years Superquinn have



15  
Volunteer Stroke Scheme

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

1991



Theo Davis (Hon. Secretary)



Enda Faughnan  
Lily Murphy



Paul Fitzpatrick  
Sr Margaret  
Kitty Cullen  
Nancy Carroll



James and Anne McCormack



Anne Lee  
Peggy Stokes (Waterford)



Anne Tuite (Treasurer)

## Volunteer Stroke Scheme

249 Crumlin Road

Dublin 12

Phone: 01-554755

Fax: 01-557013

Registered Charity CMY 6989

### Committee

Chairperson: Ann Kavanagh

Vice-Chairperson: Kate Kavanagh

Secretary: Theo Davis

Treasurer: Anne Tuite

### Members:

John Annesley

John L'Estrange

Joan Monaghan

Bride Murphy

Gina O'Donohue

Chris Sherwin

### Editorial Committee:

John L'Estrange (editor)

Michael McGinley

### Supervisors:

Marie O'Brien

Erica O'Mara

More **volunteers** and **drivers** are required by the VSS. Contact us at the number given above or write to hear more.

Volunteers are needed to start a Volunteer Stroke Scheme in the Naas/Maynooth areas.

Please write to: Ms Judy Thornton

Speech Therapist

Eastern Health Board

Naas

Co. Kildare

Phone: 045-76001

## 16 Aims of the Volunteer Stroke Scheme

1 To help people who suffer from speech and allied problems as a result of a stroke.

2 To offer each patient a small team of volunteers who will visit singly for about an hour at a time on a regular weekly basis.

3 To provide a club where patients can meet and be further helped.

4 To provide outings from time to time.

5 To create a greater awareness and understanding of Stroke through effective and relevant publicity.

## Subscription £5.00 a year

I wish to subscribe to the Volunteer Stroke Scheme and I enclose £5.00 for 1991.

Name .....

Address .....

Phone: .....

Cheques should be made payable to the Volunteer Stroke Scheme

Signed: .....

Date: .....

VSS News is distributed to hospitals and Health Boards throughout the country free of charge. Organisations requiring copies of VSS News please contact the Editor at 249 Crumlin Road, Dublin 12 (Phone 01-557455), between 10.00 am and 12.30 pm on Monday, Wednesday or Thursday.