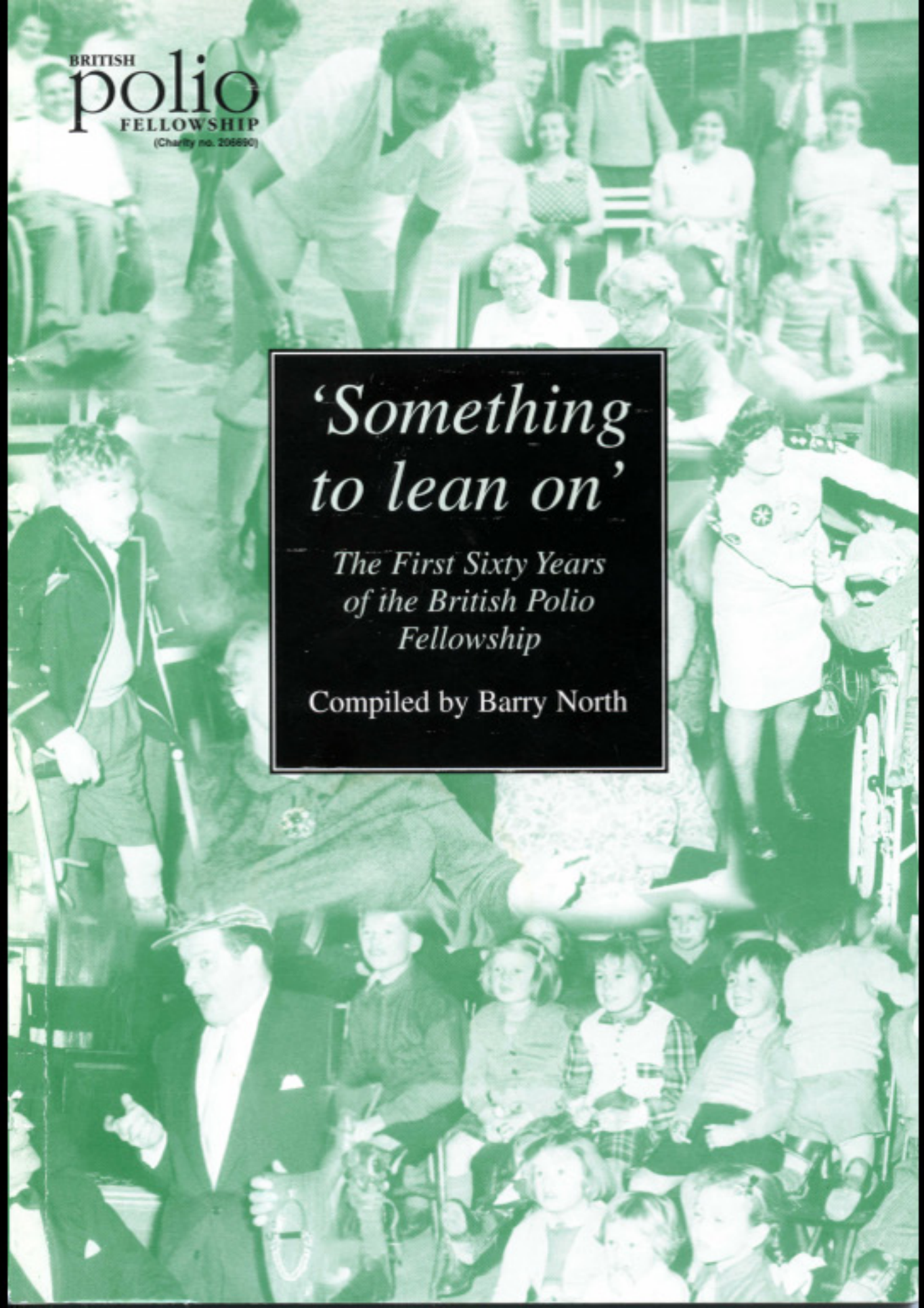

'Something to lean on'

The First Sixty Years of the British Polio Fellowship

Compiled by Barry North

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SOMETHING TO LEAN ON

Introduction by Dr Patrick Moore CBE

During the 1930s those who had a disability were often shunned or, at best, tolerated by society. There was little welfare provision, they were often regarded as 'unemployable' - education, therefore, was not seen as being of great benefit. Marriage and a normal family life, holidays, social gatherings, dignity, and achievement, were almost unknown.

The prevailing atmosphere was one where able-bodied people made provisions for those with disabilities and 'handed out' charity and opportunities as they thought best suited the individual case.

In 1938 two people met up; they were both disabled by polio. They were both frustrated by society's approach to disability and decided to challenge these attitudes by starting an organisation for people with disabilities that was led by people with disabilities.

From these small beginnings sprang a large national organisation and, in the sixty years since that organisation was first formed, it has greatly changed the lives of those disabled by polio - those for whom the vaccine came too late. As well as providing social contact, mutual support, and combatting isolation, many improvements have been made in the role and status of all disabled people. Many of the provisions for people with disabilities that we today take for granted, such as education and employment, were hard-won in those early days. The modern-day availability of welfare support, good-quality aids, and mobility facilities are direct descendants of campaigns fought in days gone by.

This little book attempts to chart some of the achievements of the first sixty years of the British Polio Fellowship originally known as the Infantile Paralysis Fellowship. The pictures and stories depict people gathering together, enjoying themselves, going to school, setting up home, working, going on holiday and doing all the everyday things of life. The words and pictures speak of a large group of people who are living with a disability, people who are bonded together by the central aim of the organisation to which they belong - the pursuit of *FELLOWSHIP*.

Something to Lean On is not only a joy to read but an important historical document which charts the work of an organisation that for sixty years has worked tirelessly on behalf of those disabled by polio and whose services will be needed well into the twenty-first century.

Patrick Moore

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Something To Lean On

The first sixty years of the British Polio Fellowship
1939-1999

Chapter 1.

The Carey family had been posted to India where father was a Brigadier in the army. One day, Patricia, then eight years old, fell ill and was diagnosed as having Infantile Paralysis (nowadays known as Poliomyelitis). Throughout her childhood Patricia coped well with the disability arising from her illness and eventually returned to Britain. However, early adulthood was proving to be a time of great frustration for a young woman in the 1930s and so she turned to the study of languages as a means of widening her horizons. Her then physiotherapist knew of another person who had been disabled by Infantile Paralysis and who was teaching German and French; it seemed obvious to bring them together. Frederic Morena had contracted Infantile Paralysis at the age of 42 when he was becoming well-known as a Shakespearean actor. His stage career had come to an abrupt end with his illness for he was now a full-time wheelchair user. He had begun teaching languages as a second career.

A fruitful meeting

Patricia Carey and Frederic Morena did not do much by way of learning languages once they had met! Each of them simply enjoyed being with another person of a like mind and a like disability. Their friendship grew and, in company with Frederic's wife Mimi, they realised that a good way of dealing with the social effects of their mutual situation was to find new friends with a disability arising from Infantile Paralysis. From this realisation came an idea - if they could cope better with a disabled life through mutual friendship, then probably other people could do the same. The notion of starting an organisation for polio-disabled people slowly grew in their minds.

The idea takes shape

It was 1938, and the world was alive with murmurs of war; everything

seemed dark but in Patricia and Frederic's eyes there gleamed a new light. They set to planning and got in touch with as many people as possible who might have a connection with polio-disabled people. As 1939 dawned they made their arrangements and on 29 January rented a small room for the evening in an art gallery in Nassau Street, Bloomsbury, London just down the road from the Morena's flat.

They had sent out notices, told people what was happening; now, would anyone come? Patricia, Frederic, and Mimi must have been on tenterhooks as the time for the meeting came closer but then one person came, and another, and another, until the room had some thirty people in it. Frederic, having a great gift of oratory, spoke about the need for an organisation. Patricia backed him up in her own way. Her idea was that people with polio could band together and give each other support, to provide 'something to lean on'. And so the suggestion that an organisation be formed was put to the meeting.

The Fellowship is born

Accepting the idea was the easy part, but what form was this new organisation to take? Was it to be a club, a society, and what should it be called? 'Infantile Paralysis', yes, of course that had to be in the name, but this was an organisation for disabled people run by disabled people to help with welfare, to provide friendship, to promote fellowship. Yes, that was it, this was to be the fellowship for people who had been affected by Infantile Paralysis, and there was the name - The Infantile Paralysis Fellowship.

At that inaugural meeting of 29 January 1939 there were people like Florence Bryant, Tom Rowley, Jeanne de Leon, Tina Withers-Lancashire and, of course, able-bodied supporters: members of families, friends, people who could see the value of this new fellowship. One of these, Waldo Eager CBE, was appointed the first Chairman and a collection was taken to help with the expenses of the fledgling organisation. Just over £5.00 was raised at that time, not a lot to get a new movement going, but enough to be going on with. Frederic Morena was appointed the first Secretary, subscriptions were set at two shillings and sixpence (12.5pence) for polio-disabled people and five shillings (25 pence) for able-bodied associate members and, with this bit of organisation, a new era began in the lives of people affected by Infantile Paralysis in Britain.

The first publicity

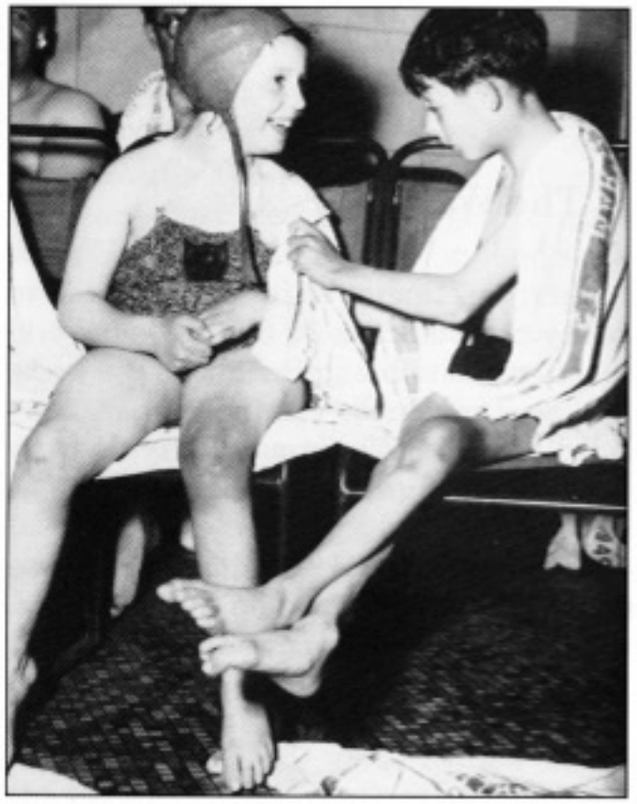
On 18 May 1939 a letter from Hugh Fletcher Moulton appeared in

The Times newspaper informing the general public of the formation of the Infantile Paralysis Fellowship which "seeks to help the sufferers help themselves and to afford each other mutual aid and sympathy". The letter went on to say that a principle objective of the Fellowship is to help members to find work and suggested that there were perhaps between five and seven thousand people with the after-effects of Infantile Paralysis in Britain at the time. It was this rarity of the condition that accentuated the feelings of isolation and loneliness which led to so many of people's difficulties. Frederic Morena's address was given and people were invited to join the Fellowship or to send donations towards its work.

And people did start to join gradually the membership list grew and it was felt that a regular means of communication was needed. The first edition of *The Bulletin*, the Fellowship's regular newsletter, appeared in April 1939 and has continued to keep in touch with members ever since. Gatherings of members were another priority; although the membership was spreading slowly all over Britain, the majority of members were to be found in London. And so *The Bulletin* carried news of a get-together at Lyons Corner House in the Strand, and about sixty people came to that very first meeting of the Fellowship proper.

The Corner House meeting was followed by a larger event at the Tea House in Kensington Gardens, London. Originally, the committee catered for some two hundred people but it soon became obvious that many more were on their way. It was estimated that four hundred people came along that afternoon.

Patricia Carey and Frederic Morena, founders of the Fellowship. In the upper picture Frederic is being presented with his life story by Eamonn Andrews on This is your Life, Patricia Carey is in the background on the far left.
In the lower picture Patricia is at the far right with Frederic, seated, to her right.



Originally the Fellowship was named the *Infantile Paralysis Fellowship* for the disease mainly affected children, and youngsters always had great importance in the Fellowship's work. Here we see two young members chatting together after competing in a Swimming Gala.

Rose Harvey and Emily Reach pose with Nurse Atkinson in the grounds of their school.

Chapter 2. The War Years

Within nine months of the inaugural meeting of the Fellowship life in Britain was thrown into turmoil by the outbreak of the Second World War. At first the war made little difference to life in Britain as the wider theatre of operations in Europe was prepared. As the end of 1939 approached the Fellowship decided to hold a Christmas Party, thereby beginning in its very first year a tradition of grand national celebrations that was to last for many years.

People who were disabled by polio knew that they were not going to be called up for military service but they too wanted to help the war effort. The exodus of a great proportion of the nation's manpower into the forces left many jobs unfilled.

Taking part in the war effort

Frederic Morena, as volunteer secretary of the Fellowship, was receiving many applications for membership from polio-disabled people from all over the country. A common theme in the letters he read was this great problem of obtaining employment. Always ready to rise to a challenge, the Fellowship decided to do something about the situation. Roby Spence, who had contracted polio in 1919 at the age of 14, was the Chairman and took the bold step of writing to Ernest Bevan MP who had, at the time, government responsibility for employment. Spence's letter explained in careful detail that people who were disabled by polio may have useless legs or arms but, in most instances had fully-functioning brains as well as a strong desire to do their bit for the war effort. Why could they not be given the jobs that had been vacated by men who had been called-up to the forces? For some two months there was silence and then a reply arrived saying that a policy of employing people with disabilities had been adopted. This meant that many polio-disabled people would be able to find work.

Frederic Moreno went to work in the Ministry of Supply and Roby Spence to an accountancy firm; others entered a wide range of jobs and showed the true employment worth of people with disabilities. This early initiative by the Fellowship was instrumental in changing long-term government policy about the employment of people with disabilities and

was a foundation upon which modern equal opportunities legislation is based.

A job at last

Through the Fellowship's intervention, offices and factories supplying the war effort were encouraged to make their premises accessible to wheelchair users and to set up low workbenches for those who carried out their tasks whilst sitting.

Albert Holman, whose legs were paralysed by polio before the war, had spent ten years feeling very isolated as he watched his two young sons grow and his wife go out to work each day to support the family. As a result of the new thinking about people with polio who worked in factories he was able to get a job. His new employers carefully selected a place where steel filings in the floor would not puncture the tyres of his wheelchair, arranged for his workbench to be lowered to the right height for him, and even made special arrangements for him to 'clock in', as the time clock was mounted too high on the wall for a wheelchair user.

The difference that this new opportunity made to Albert was immeasurable. He wrote:

Now, after more than three years, I am back amongst the men, the machines. Once more I sniff the odour of hot oil, hear the scraping of files on metal, sometimes I hear the coarse jokes, I hear the serious exchange of opinions of thinking men, I take part in the endless little incidents that are all part of the day's work. In fact, despite infantile paralysis, despite the wheelchair, despite all the handicaps, of a man unable to walk, I am once more one of the crowd and, with the goodwill of my employers and workmates, I hope to continue for many years to come.

The Fellowship grows

Frederic Morena carried on with his work as Secretary of the Fellowship during the war years, holding down a full-time job and doing Fellowship work in the evenings from his home in Nassau Street, London. The war was always near: at one time a V-2 rocket dropped just a short distance from the Fellowship's headquarters. Although it was not possible for people to travel to meetings during the war, the postal services were still in operation. It was at this time that *The Bulletin* became the organisation's lifeline. Paper and printing materials were not easily come by but the newsletter continued to be printed and distributed. Printed for a time in a windowless shed in a field in Enfield, Middlesex, *The Bulletin* continued to be published throughout the hostilities and

helped the Fellowship to grow in numbers and influence.

Another use that the Fellowship made of the postal service was to start a penpals' circle. By sharing polio people's names and address the Fellowship, despite its inability to meet, managed to put people in touch with each other so that they could share experiences and give mutual support - even Adolf Hitler could not stop fellowship amongst polio people! Indeed such was the enthusiasm during those early years that Mimi and Frederic Morena organised a bazaar near Tottenham Court Road in London in a bombed-out shop with no door and boarded up windows!

Trying to find the answer

Polio, as every other viral disease, is not something that stops for the duration of the war. The number of cases of the disease was increasing with further epidemics in some areas. In the early 1940s there was no way of curing the disease although many different ideas were tried out. It was known that people who had caught polio would not catch it again as they were immune, and so people with polio tried experimentally donating their blood to those who had been recently infected in the hope that this might effect a cure. *A Convalescent Serum Service* was started in 1942 but the treatment was deemed a failure in 1947.

A number of British troops were returning from overseas having contracted polio in far-off countries. Services for those who had become disabled were hard to come by during the days of austerity and many polio people felt a great sense of isolation. The new Fellowship became vitally important in such situations, *The Bulletin* providing contact with others in many parts of the country. By the end of the war the circulation was five hundred - and the readership probably many more. As a result of an appeal in *The Bulletin* many polio people who were in hospital over Christmas would receive parcels, letters and Christmas cards from friends in the Fellowship - most of whom they had never met.

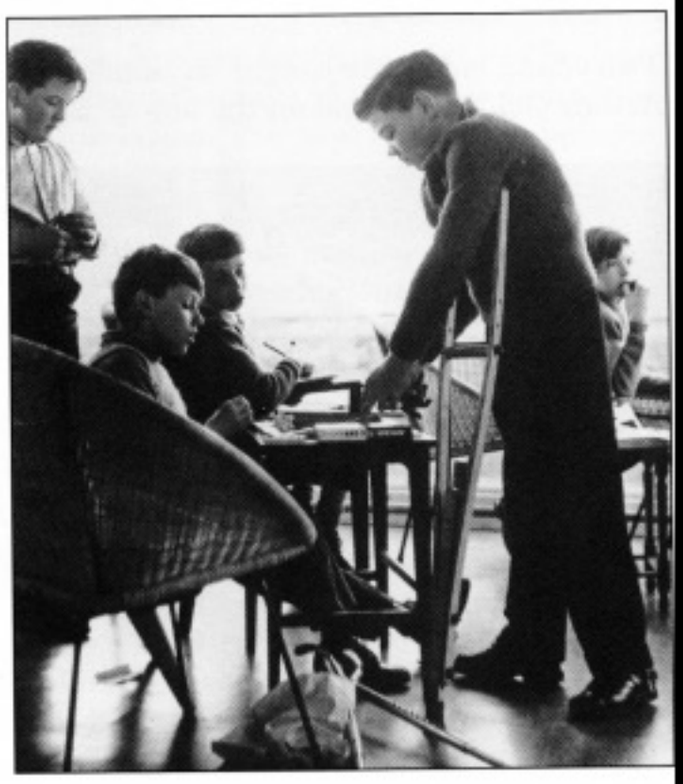
As the war was coming to an end *The Bulletin* announced the death of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who was four times President of the United States of America despite his severe disability through polio. In the USA, Roosevelt had founded the Warm Springs Foundation in Georgia as a centre of excellence in the rehabilitation of people with polio. No such facility existed in Great Britain and, in the months following Roosevelt's death as the nation discussed a memorial for the great man, Frederic Moreno called for a practical tribute - a polio institute in Britain that would serve this country and the British Empire. Sadly, his dream was never realised.

Two young ladies are caught on camera; on the right a picture by Arthur Goldthorpe and on the left M. Shaftoe of Newcastle.

On the sands at Lytham, another portrait by Arthur Goldthorpe.

Two happy imps - Marcia and Ted Draper in 1940.

A hive of industry; young members assemble plastic kits on a wet day at the Northern Lantern hotel.



Chapter 3. A new start

As the May 1945 edition of *The Bulletin* was in production news, arrived of the Allied victory in Europe. Seizing the moment, the Fellowship immediately started to plan a Victory Rally which was held over the weekend of 1 and 2 September 1945. On the Saturday people gathered in the grounds of Lambeth Palace, the home of the Archbishop of Canterbury, at 3p.m. for a garden party, then at 6p.m. they went off to the West End to see *Arsenic and Old Lace*. On Sunday morning those from outside London were taken on a motor-bus sight-seeing tour of London which ended at Westminster Abbey in time for a thanksgiving service. Then followed lunch at St George's Restaurant in Southampton Row and a time of fellowship until tea.

Getting things going

As the nation adjusted itself to peace-time the vision that Patricia Carey and Frederic Morena had back in 1938 was pursued with great vigour. The Fellowship had swiftly become recognised as the main organisation speaking for polio-disabled people in Britain and it had great plans for the future. As well as expansion of membership right across the country, plans included the opening of a holiday home for members.

Inevitably, the Fellowship needed money. Annual subscriptions were two shillings and sixpence (12.5 pence) which would not bring in a vast amount.

A holiday hotel

It was in November 1945 that the Fellowship was able announce the acquisition of a holiday home on the east coast at Clacton, Essex, as the result of an arrangement with John Groom's Crippleage which no longer required their former residential home which had been used by the military during the war. During 1946 the plans to open the holiday home at Clacton were abandoned, but the idea of a place for polio people to go for a vacation was not lost - it would simply be a few more years before the dream became a reality.

Going to the pictures

The campaigning stance of the Fellowship was never quiet and one initiative which concerned many people was the difficulty experienced in going to the cinema by members who used wheelchairs. 'Going to the pictures' was one of the most popular pastimes of the age and the necessarily fixed seats and sloping floors of most picture houses made accessibility for the wheelchair-user almost impossible. Frederic Morena asked Michael Flanders, a polio-affected member who was to go on to have a successful career as a performer of comic songs, to look into the matter.

Legislation was a problem as the law required that all seats be fixed to enable an easy means of escape in an emergency. The Fellowship was never daunted by slight problems such as changing the law of the land and, for many months after first being asked to take on the problem, Michael Flanders persevered until the desired outcome was achieved.

Celebrating Christmas

The idea of a national Christmas party was revived as soon as possible after the war and so, at the end of 1945, members of the Fellowship gathered at the York Hotel in Berners Street, London. An enormous Christmas cake had been baked and a gigantic Christmas tree laden with presents dominated the room.

Some well-known celebrities who were to feature greatly in the Fellowship's life joined in the festivities, notably 'Wee' Georgie Wood. The Mayor and Mayoress of St Marylebone cut the cake and everyone enjoyed a grand tea and the distribution of presents. In years to come the parties were held at the Seymour Hall and the Guildhall in London.

One thought that occurred to many at that Christmas party was that it really was only convenient for people who lived in London and the Home Counties to attend. The Fellowship, though, wished to be a truly national organisation. Connie Dawes (later Page) came up with an idea that would create a series of branches throughout the country, thereby making the Fellowship local as well as national.

The National Christmas Party was a great tradition that started right at the beginning of the Fellowship's history. A view from an event at Seymour hall in London.

Dame Vera Lynn was always a great supporter of the national Christmas Party and many other Fellowship activities. Here she 'does the autographs'.

Chapter 4. Polio personalities

Looking at some people, well-known and otherwise, who have lived with polio

Dudley Chapman

The very first meeting of the Fellowship took place in 1939 and Dudley Chapman ensured that he was there. He had contracted polio as a teenager and, although it left him severely disabled, there was something very special about Dudley's approach somehow he had an inner smile that encouraged everyone else to smile too, despite a great pile of troubles. Dudley Chapman's name appears many times in this small volume for he was an important person in the life of the Fellowship; to try to sum up his life would take a lot more than the small amount of space available here. A national newspaper carried an article about a meeting with Herbert Edward Dudley Chapman.

> "They say about Dudley Chapman that he performs little miracles... they say he can raise a smile on a pinched, pain-racked face that hasn't known happiness in years. They say he went to a 30-year-old disabled girl who had not been out of her house for years because she was ashamed and frightened and transformed her into a bright, laughing soul, who sings at social and in choirs.
>
> 'I used to be 100 per cent paralysed, Polio, you know', he said in an offhand chatty way. Dudley went down with it when he was 16 - it caught him as he toboganned down Harrow Hill. Polio, you see, strikes swift and deadly.
>
> About those little miracles... Dudley Chapman grinned and said, 'No, I don't perform miracles; I just go through life trying to cheer people up. You see, when polio gets inside you, you feel that all you are fit for is the dustbin. Your body can't move, but your brain can - and it thinks dark and awful thoughts. The miracle begins when the victim begins to smile; thats the first come-back blow in the long fight.
>
> This happy man, Dudley, full of the joys of living, spending his whole life helping people struck down by the disease we know little about, shook his head and said softly:' Troubles? My young friend Roger Evans is 11, has been disabled since three. His father

was killed and his mother has died. Troubles? I know young wives whose world is four walls wide...children who can't lift a finger....men whose burning amibition is to move a hand just enough to pat their kiddie on the head. There are all sorts of troubles people don't know about. But I'll tell you one thing - I don't know a happier or braver kid than Roger Evans and I don't know a more cheerful lot than us polios'. He paused - 'That is, once we can raise a smile after the first realisation that polio has struck'.
And that is what Dudley Chapman does - goes around giving people in despair hope to grasp at, a desire to fight back, comradeship of others in adversity. And perhaps above all, the ability to smile. By heavens, that IS a little miracle."

Dudley Chapman, always supported by his wife Jessie, founded the Fellowship's highly successful Christmas card business, ran his own printing business, worked with Mimi Morena to start the Fellowship's continental holidays, founded the Harrow branch of the Fellowship, and contributed greatly to its national organisation. There were many other acheivements but the greatest of all his successes was that which Wilfred Pickles described so well - the ability to bring a smile into a darkened life.

Pam McDonald

Pam was born in 1942 and contracted polio when she was nearly 3 years old. Following a short time in an iron lung she was placed on a bed frame for two years in hospital. Most of her childhood was taken up by periods in and out of the local hospital in South Wales. Those days in hospital were hard; her parents were only allowed to visit once each month for fear that they might "bring in germs", the nurses would frighten the children by saying that planes flying overhead would bomb the hospital, and Pam was sent home simply because she had nits in her hair. When Sister Kenny was in London, Pam's mother was refused permission to seek a second opinion about her treatment; if they went to London, the hospital would have nothing further to do with the child.

Despite an interrupted education Pam passed her eleven-plus examination and found a local grammar school that was all on the ground floor. Here the Head, staff and pupils were very accepting of a girl who wore a spinal brace and walked with calipers. Following school, Pam went to college in Cardiff to train as a social worker, a job which she did for some two years. When she was in her late teens she went on a Fellowship-arranged holiday to France and had a wild time in Grenoble despite being expected to use a bedpan in the car whilst travelling, for lack of accessible toilets! The French called her a flirt because she wore make-up.

Pam married Ian in 1977 and Sarah was born in 1981. The pregnancy was slightly complicated by the need to not wear her spinal brace from about the fifth month but it passed by uneventfully.

Pam, like so many other people, refused to become a polio "victim"; she has always got on with life being a wife, mother, and an active member of the community.

Beverley Gull

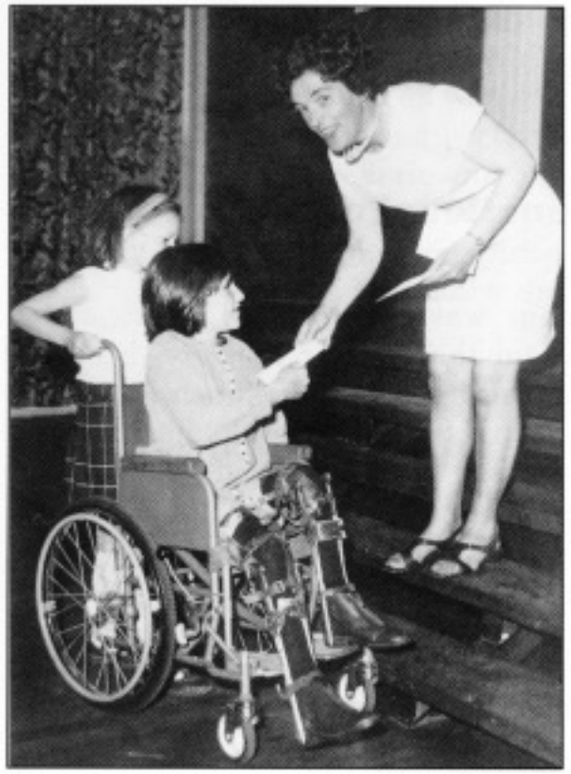
Polio at the age of 2 left Beverley walking with calipers and crutches she had a happy but challenging childhood, being the one girl amongst three brothers. Her parents always tried to treat her as no different from their other children. One day the boys, being boys, clambered on to the school roof and helped Beverley up with them. When they saw the caretaker coming, the lads took off fast, leaving Beverley stranded and at the mercy of the janitor!

Beverley joined the Ilford branch of the Fellowship as a child and took great delight in the swimming sessions organised by the branch at Ilford High Road Baths. The voluntary helpers there improved Beverley's swimming and encouraged her to enter for the regional and, eventaully, national galas of the Fellowship where she enjoyed great success. Travelling around the country and competing against other swimmers with disabilities was a source of great excitement to a youngster but this paled into insignificance when Beveley was asked to be Polio Queen at the local carnival.

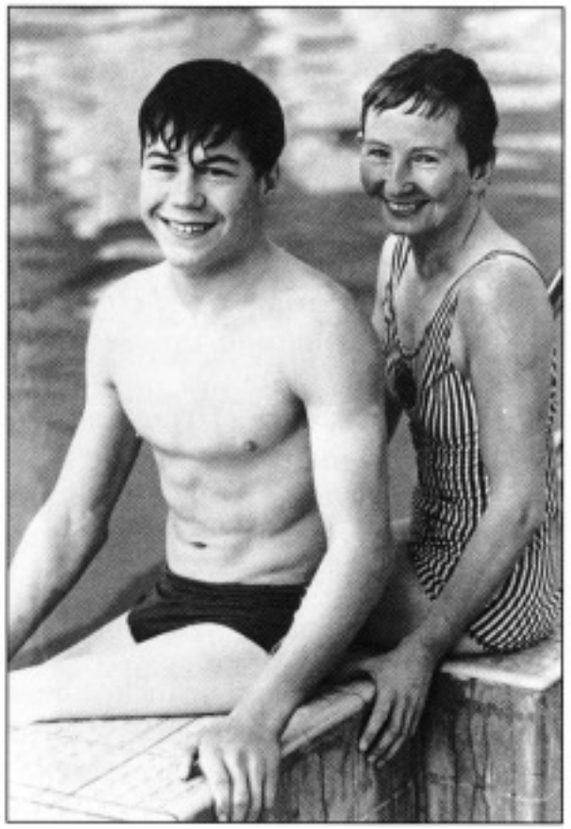
Over the years Beverley went the way of many young ladies and lost contact with the Fellowship. She married and had a family and thought little of these things until one day, when preparing to move house, she discovered an old swimming medal in a box. She contacted Central Office and rejoined. The first edition of *The Bulletin* that she received contained a picture of her as Polio Queen!

At the age of 29 Beveley was involved in a near-fatal car accident and, as part of her recovery was re-introduced to swimming. She joined the British Paraplegic Sports Society and started competitive swimming once again. Over the next nine years she gained forthy-one international gold medals, three of which were at the paralympics. She was awarded the MBE for services to disability sport in 1993 and has been Sports Personality of the Year. At present, Beverley is training in scuba diving.

She has no doubt where the foundation for her success in swimming lies - in those teenage years with the Fellowship. The hard work of the coaches at Ilford certainly paid off for Beverley and for disabled swimming in the UK.



The Fellowship is primarily about people and loves to celebrate their achievements. Here we see Caroline Taylor being presented with a prize by Mrs A. Overend and (below) Alice Liddy and Geraint Killa, young winners in the Welsh Regional Swimming Gala in 1969.



Chapter 5. Building a national organisation

The first branch of the Fellowship was inaugurated at Reading, Berkshire on 22 April 1946 when, on that Easter Monday, Frederic Morena met up in Connie Dawes' home with four others, including John Tricker who was born in 1924 and contracted polio in 1938, resulting in early total paralysis. He was hospitalised until 1941 and regained the partial use of his arms and upper body. In October of that year he began work as a junior with an engineering company. John trained as an accountant whilst working and rose to become the company accountant of an associated business.

John was a life-long active Christian who had joined the Fellowship during the war; he married Mary in 1956 and they had two children. He served the Fellowship in many capacities at branch, regional and national level, becoming National Vice-Chairman and National Treasurer.

In 1981 John developed severe respiratory problems and was admitted to the Phipps Unit. As a result he became Secretary to the 'Breathtaking Appeal' that helped the Unit to develop and relocate to St Thomas's Hospital under its new name of the Lane-Fox Unit.

Reading was quickly followed by the start-up of the Portland (Mansfield) Branch in Nottinghamshire. Many polio people had been treated at the Harlow Wood Hospital and Portland Training Centre just outside Mansfield, and this seemed an ideal place in which to start a branch.

With the assistance of Tom and Eva Rowley, Peter Lawton, Margaret McMann and many others, the new branch prospered and took great pride in performing its own pantomime, Dick Whittington, for its first Christmas; by mid-1947 the branch had a hundred and twenty members.

The branches grow

The movement to form branches began to change from a trickle to a full flow as 1946 moved into 1947. Rita Sargeant hired the hall of Holly Lodge School for the first meeting of the Merseyside branch. In Exeter,

Vera Jenkins was beavering away at organising the inaugural meeting which took place on 14 March, whilst Dudley Kitching was doing much the same in Leatherhead as was Joan Yates in Sheffield.

All this branch-forming activity received much support from headquarters (still Frederic and Mimi's home) and, as well as sending out information about how to get a branch moving, Frederic Morena would often go to the meeting himself, accompanied wherever possible by the National Chairman, Roby Spence.

Keeping in touch

In 1947 the Fellowship's newsletter, the IPF Bulletin, changed from being two sheets of cyclostyled foolscap to a professionally-printed four page production. This was due to the efforts of Dudley Chapman, severely disabled by polio, who had set up a printing business in Harrow, West London.

Having contracted polio at the age of 16, Dudley realised that his hopes of a scientific career had been dashed. Once he was able to move around a little he persuaded his father to obtain a small printing press for his use. This was placed in the greenhouse and became known as "Dudley's Hobby". A few months later Dudley informed his father that he wished to expand. Dad was nonplussed but agreed, and moved the press to the garage. Even that was not big enough and Dad was persuaded to lend Dudley £70 to set up in a proper commercial way.

In the first seven years the £70 grew to a £2,000 annual turnover in a business having its own premises and a number of staff. The initial investment was repaid to Dad, along with interest. After the war Dudley worked in conjunction with the Fellowship to establish and increase the Christmas card business which became the mainstay of the Fellowship's income. He was able to acquire purpose-built premises at The Runway (the road where the present-day Central Office is located) and saw many millions of cards being sold every year. Not bad for "Dudley's Hobby".

Formal organisation

Although the Fellowship was now eight years old it did not have a formal Constitution; the coming of the war had pushed this important organisational step into the background. The oversight was remedied on 8 March 1947 when the first Constitution was formally adopted, the Fellowship having Waldo Eager continuing as National Chairman and about 1,300 members throughout Britain.

In August 1947 the Fellowship moved into its first 'proper' offices at 37 Tavistock Place, London, a converted shop that had ground-floor access

and plenty of room for meetings, visitors, and the increasing number of voluntary staff that the organisation then needed.

Cash flow

What with new premises, approaching 2,000 members, and seven branches, the Fellowship was becoming acutely aware of its need for money. Some £3,000 a year was required to keep going and there was no help from government or other statutory bodies. In the USA the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis of America had successfully organised the *March of Dimes* for some years. 'Wee' Georgie Wood, the entertainer who supported the Fellowship for many years, suggested a *March of Bobs* for Britain. In just a few months he raised over 10,000 bobs (one shilling, or 5 pence in today's money) and that brought in a very useful £500.

Georgie Wood was so keen to help that, having organised an all-star variety concert in September 1947, he was most disappointed that he could not appear on stage having recently broken his arm in a fall. Undaunted, he managed to get a line from his home to the Rex Theatre in Wilmslow and spoke to the audience over the public address system. Georgie Wood had fractured his humerus and joked that, being a comedian, he needed all the funny bones he had!

It was in October 1947 that the very first Fellowship collecting boxes became available and these useful little repositories of spare change continued to help to swell the funds for many years to come.

The fear of polio

The incidence of new cases of polio in the mid-1940s was very high; in some places it reached epidemic level, there being 600 new cases during one week in mid-1947. The disease brought great fears, especially amongst parents for their children; 10per cent of those who caught polio died and many were left with a permanent disability. There was no way of preventing the disease and, as is the case today, no known cure. It had been shown that the virus could be water-borne and, when infection was at its height many people kept their children away from swimming pools. In fact this was quite unnecessary, as the chlorinated water of a properly-organised baths would not carry the virus. The real problem was in ponds of stagnant water, especially during the summer months.

Frederic Morena often looked wistfully across the Atlantic and compared the vast amount for research into polio that went on in the United States with the paucity of concern that was shown by the medical authorities in Britain. The Fellowship campaigned vociferously

for the opening of a British institute for polio research and rehabilitation but to no avail. It had called for the memorial to the late President Roosevelt to be of a practical nature and Frederic Morena was most annoyed when it was decided instead to erect a statue in the great man's honour.

The American association helped out by loaning copies of their films *New Horizons* and Accent on Use which the Fellowship promoted in every way possible. The films helped doctors to reach an early diagnosis of polio and encouraged them to take the right course of action once the acute stage of the disease had been passed.

In 1950 the Fellowship produced its own film, *'A Life to be Lived'*, the work of Jack Hedley and Rhona Anderson, which showed a dramatised account of a man who contracts polio and passes through a prolonged rehabilitation procedure. The film included a short history of the Fellowship and an appeal at the end for people to help.

Getting research moving

By 1952 it had become obvious that the government had no intention of creating a polio research institute and so the Fellowship, characteristically, decided to go it alone. In December of that year the National Polio Research Fund was created by the Fellowship with the aim of raising £100,000 by the end of 1953 to set up a proper research organisation. Duncan Guthrie described the Fund as an attempt to give doctors and medical researchers the freedom to follow lines of research that might lead to a vaccine, a cure, or some way of improving the lot of people who had been affected by polio. He envisioned a purpose-built unit as well as having the resources to make grants to individual research projects.

The Fund raised sufficient money to sponsor valuable research and, after the vaccine had been invented, set its sights wider, developed into Action Research for the Crippled Child under Duncan Guthrie and continued in valuable research for many years.

Above: Members of Wolverhampton Branch pose by the Major Oak in Sherwood Forest. Note the old-style canvas-seated wheelchairs.

Below: Each year local taxi drivers would take polio-disabled children from the Glasgow area on an outing to Troon. The taxis were decorated, the taximen wore fancy dress, and everyone had a grand time!

Many celebrities have helped the Fellowship over the years.

Jimmy Edwards (left) presents a cheque to a young member at a National Christmas Party.

'Wee' Georgie Wood was a stalwart supporter, raising large sums of money over the years, here he is seen (below) driving a model train at Bradford Branch's garden party on 25 August 1951.

More Fellowship celebrities. On the left we see Harry Secombe helping a member to a drink whilst below is another view of Jimmy Edwards and a young member, this time joined by Vera Lynn.

A number of members of the Fellowship's governing bodies have rendered sterling service over the years.

These have included Tom Rowley seen standing behind Frederick Morena in the top photograph.

Sir Graham Rowlandson was an important influence in the early days; in the centre photograph, he is seated speaking with Frederick Morena.

The bottom picture shows Eric Johnson with some young members.

Chapter 6. Our roots are our branches

The trickle of branches that formed during the late 1940s grew to a tide in the 1950s, most major towns wanting a Fellowship branch all of their own. It was through this network of local organisations that the real work of fellowship went on. People who were formerly isolated by reason of their disability could now find a place in which to meet new friends, gain support, and find times of great enjoyment. Frederic Morena and the Chairman Roby Spence always tried to be at the inaugural meetings of new branches and this often meant driving many miles and being away from home for days on end.

Deflated but undaunted!

One day, Frederic Morena drove to the initial meeting of a Yorkshire branch without Roby. On the way his car suffered a puncture and he had to get out to mend it. The weather was foul, it was raining hard and water was being splashed everywhere by passing vehicles. Being unable to walk, Frederic had to jack the car up, change the wheel and put everything away whilst dragging himself along the ground. He persisted and completed his journey, arriving at his destination covered in mud and very damp. Perhaps those attending that first meeting wondered what was going on when the guest speaker appeared before them in such a dishevelled state, but Frederic's message soon dispelled any doubts from their minds and a motion was passed to form the branch.

Making a difference

Initially, branches would meet in a convenient central location for social evenings on a weekly or less frequent basis. As people got to know each other and individual needs became apparent, the branch was able to help with welfare matters. Perhaps a typewriter was purchased for someone who could no longer use his hands to write, extra clothing was provided for a member whose calipers wore through trousers so quickly, or people simply shared information on how to make those important little gadgets that made life with a disability so much more easy.

Each branch was encouraged to have a welfare officer who would receive, confidentially, requests for help and do all that was possible to

meet them. Local welfare officers were supported by a national officer at Central Office and, over the years, by a number of retained visitors based around the country who would visit and assess in complex instances.

Some instances of intervention by the branch welfare officer were quite dramatic. Take, for instance, the story of Jack, who after years in hospital went home, attended a training course and found a clerical job. One day his widowed mother fell ill and, by noon, had died. Jack was helpless for he needed a great deal of help in the mornings and evenings; the branch welfare officer took action, sought advice from Central Office and soon Jack was found a place in one the Fellowship's hostels where he had employment, an income and independence.

Another telling story concerned Mary who fell and broke a caliper. When the branch welfare officer visited he found her situation was far worse than just a break in a surgical instrument. He found her sitting in the overcrowded kitchen of her dirty slum home; her calipers were tied up with wire, her crutches held together with string, her boots broken, and she was utterly demoralised. The welfare officer arranged for a hospital visit, for help with new clothing, she was assisted in finding a training course and, as a more immediate form of help, sent on holiday with a new hairstyle. Mary went on to hold down a job and gain independence.

The first national welfare conference was held over the weekend of 29 June 1952 and brought together welfare officers and delegates of over thirty branches from all over the country. Keynote speakers included experts on the employment of people with disabilities and welfare benefits. Delegates also had the opportunity of putting their own questions to a Brains Trust of eminent people in the Fellowship and in the world of welfare for people with disabilities. Running for a number of years these conferences were seen as important resources and often attracted top people as their speakers.

Fun and games

The social life of the branches was important too; the meetings were often made very special by entertainment and parties. Polio people love to enjoy themselves and little excuse is needed to arrange a celebration. Professional and amateur entertainers were always willing to help the Fellowship. Edna Collins, founder of the Birmingham branch, speaks of the very full programme which the members in the second city enjoyed in 1949 - Betty Barnes, her dancers and artistes at Bearwood; Professor Odell, "the inebriated magician", along with the Northfield Male Voice

Choir, and Keene & Gumbley, comedians, giving a fine show in a church hall; the inevitable Christmas party and then another by invitation of the Wolverhampton branch - all this in the space of three months.

Performers such as *The Associated Wizards of the South*, the *Sheffield Magical Society*, the York Repertory Players, the Hendon Operetta Company and many others entertained members and also staged special events to raise funds for branches. Some of these fund-raising activities were quite spectacular. The York branch, under the guidance of the charismatic Monsieur Pierre, arranged a series of dances at the De Grey Rooms at which tickets always sold out quickly and, on the night, crowds of people would be outside pressing to get into the already-full hall.

The list of branch activities was wide and varied and many simple traditions developed over the years. It became almost impossible to attend any Fellowship event without purchasing a raffle ticket and, if the Committee were short of an idea for a social evening, the mainstay of bingo could always be relied upon. When members got together for a special occasion - an AGM, a day by the sea or some other outing, they would often meet for a meal and, somehow, it always seemed to be a ham salad! Over the years the branches of the Fellowship must have consumed many forests-full of paper in raffle and bingo tickets as well as keeping the pig-farming industry in business.

Branch members were clever with their hands and many branches and regions would organise handicraft competitions at which people would enter their knitting, crochet, scones, Victoria sandwiches, and pictures either painted or taken with a camera.

Dramatis Personae!

The tradition of entertaining ourselves was started early on by the Mansfield branch with their pantomime and was continued in a number of branches which staged plays, pantos, and concerts for their members and a wider audience. The Croydon branch had a former ballet dancer as a member, Tena Withers-Lancashire. She joined the play-reading circle and soon transformed it into a full-blown concert party known as the "Ups and Downs". All the members were disabled and very talented. The range of acts in the show was considerable: songs, impersonations, hypnotism, and larger song-and-dance routines. When she was only s6 years old Susan Noble performed "The Teddy Bears' Picnic" to John Wiltshire's accompaniment. Roby Spence was the compere who held it all together whilst the other dozen entertainers showed their great skill. In January 1952 the *Ups and Downs* put on a special show for the

National Children's Party at Seymour Hall in London and then went on to appear on television in the "In Town Tonight" programme. Tena married Rex Philips in May 1954.

Not to be outdone, the North London branch soon followed suit and, with the likes of Monica Young in membership, started the "Down and Outs" who advertised their willingness to put on a show for other branches and, indeed, organisations outside the Fellowship. In Leeds the concert party was called the "Nitwits", but opinion was that they were no fools when it came to creating a memorable performance.*Christmas parties* The greatest celebration of the year was always the National Christmas Party. The first great gathering took place in January 1947 at the York Hotel, Berners Street, London. For Christmas 1947 the event moved to Stockwell in South London. There were over 700 at the Paddington Hall in 1948, and by 1949 close on aalways the National Christmas Party. The first great gathering took place in January 1947 at the York Hotel, Berners Street, London. For Christmas 1947 the event moved to Stockwell in South London. There were over 700 at the Paddington Hall in 1948, and by 1949 close on a thousand people crowded into Seymour Hall - a venue which became synonymous with these annual festivities.

The members who attended these parties were often overwhelmed by it all. They would come from far and wide, on public transport, in ambulances, motor-chairs, wheeling or walking with crutches. Vera Lynn always tried to be there, and would inevitably get the job of cutting the cake. Entertainments would be provided by many professional artists, such as Charlie Chester, Wilfred Pickles, and that great supporter, Wee Georgie Wood. The Lady Ratlings with their wide connections in show business regularly produced a magnificent show with all the artists giving their services free of charge. *Movietone News* filmed the whole event for the cinemas of the nation and the Pearly Kings and Queens added a little more sparkle to the party.

The event had to be organised with near-military precision; there were a lot people to fit into the hall, cakes to bake, ice-creams to serve, a big audience to entertain, and, most important of all, the arrival of Father Christmas who had a present for every child at the party - his treat was to get a kiss from Vera Lynn!

Eventually the Christmas Party became so popular that numbers simply had to be restricted; the children's party was held in a neighbouring room, able-bodied helpers were banished to the balconies, and still the authorities worried about gangways being blocked by wheelchairs, crutches and sticking-out legs! These great gatherings

certainly showed that fellowship was really being achieved; the parties were one of the most popular activities of the Fellowship until their discontinuation in 1959.

Despite her very busy schedule Vera Lynn tried never to miss one of these parties; her first was in 1949. She had a simple way about her, despite her fame, that led to an easy rapport between herself and members of all ages. Vera showed a genuine interest in the lives of people who had been affected by polio and did a great deal behind the scenes to promote the work of the Fellowship, encouraging other artists to act as big-name attractions for Fellowship activities and helping to plead the cause of the polio-disabled.

More and more

The branches soldiered on, growing all the while. By the end of 1951 there were forty-one groups and branches spread all over the country and even over the water in Northern Ireland. Many branches had made great achievements and had headquarters buildings which were owned or leased.

By the mid-1950s a number of branches had their own permanent homes which could be made available to members on most if not every day of the week. In Birmingham a twenty-five roomed house at 13 Westbourne Gardens, right next to the Botanical Gardens; was acquired with the help of the students of Birmingham University and many other friends. Opened on 1 October 1955, the headquarters enabled a very wide range of social, welfare and hobby activities to be carried on by branch members. Over the years the branch was able to employ a full-time Secretary who lived on the premises, the most notable of these probably being Walter Treadwell, known to everyone as "Treader" whose unstinting service to the branch was a great example to many.

In April 1955 the Croydon branch had acquired the lease (from the local authority) to the Lantern Hall. Adopting good business techniques they sublet part of the premises to other charitable organisations and thereby offset some of the costs of the building. The hall became an important focus of thebranch and provided a base for a wide range of activities, especially the highly successful concert party, the Ups and Downs.

Sheffield was the first branch to have its own headquarters as a result of the work of Arnold Fowler and the fund-raising efforts of the local university students. The donations enabled the house to be purchased outright and fully equipped for activities such as handicraft classes, television viewing, lectures and debates, concerts, committee work, and

all manner of other events.

Sutton acquired its own building during 1955, whilst Walsall had been occupants of theirs since 1951. Other home-owning branches at the time included Guisborough and Beckenham. The Walton-on-Thames branch, working with the local Rotary Club, had acquired 'Silverwood' which was to become a residence for people who had had polio as well as providing a headquarters for the branch. Other branches made arrangements to use shared halls, British Legion clubs, and other suitable premises so that members could get together.

As early as 1949 the Grimsby and Cleethorpes branch had purchased its own ambulance for transporting members to meetings. Others did the same over the years, buying specialist vehicles with ramps and hydraulic lifts. The "transport" was driven by a whole army of volunteer drivers who did far more than just sit behind the wheel. They would help members into their wheelchairs, assist them down the stairs, and do far more lifting and carrying than they should, all so that people could get together for that magic experience: fellowship.

In the early 1960s the number of branches and groups totalled ninety-six, providing local contact and support for the majority of the 16,000 members of the Fellowship. Some people, inevitably, lived too far away from a town to be a member of the local branch and these had the opportunity to be a 'Central Office member', enjoying all the privileges of Fellowship membership but not being directly attached to a branch.

In days when a television at home was a real luxury, the Coronation of 1953 became an important event for many branches. Some members of the Fellowship were lucky enough to travel to London to see the event at first hand as places had been offered in a national promotion, but most members were far from the capital on that June day. Enterprising branch secretaries in many places contacted television dealers and cajoled them into lending a television for the day. And so it was that people gathered to watch the ceremonial and to have their own local celebration of the crowning of Queen Elizabeth II.

One member acquired a television of her own to be placed by her hospital bed. Mary Gould was in Harlow Wood Hospital at Mansfield in the summer of 1953 and, through the generosity of the pupils of Northwood College, Middlesex, funds were raised to purchase a television for a Fellowship member. Mary was the lucky recipient of an item of equipment which brought her many hours of joy.

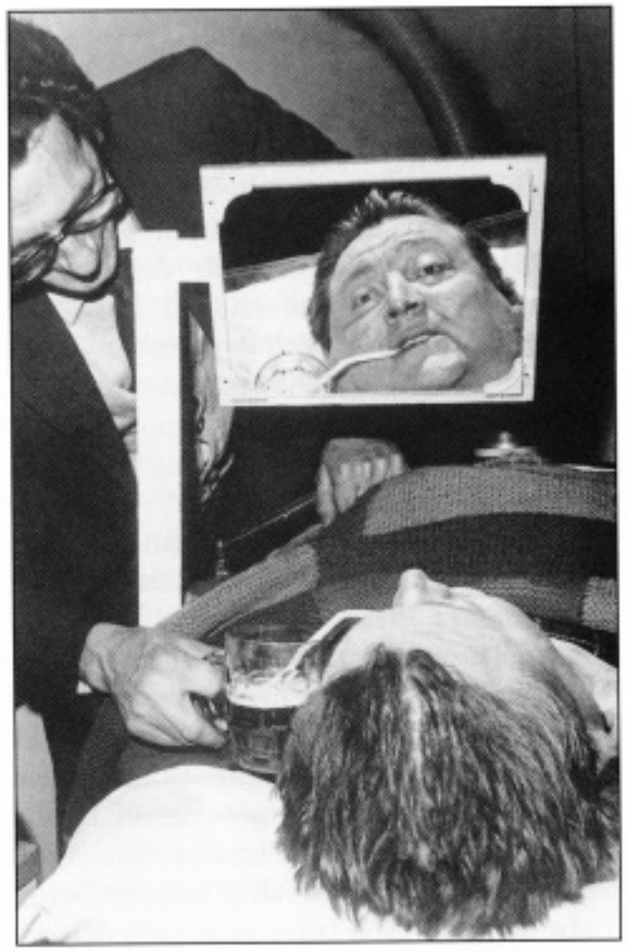
What a lot we do

As well as all these activities some branches became quite specialist in

Everyone loves to join in at the party.

The photograph on the right shows Dennis Atkin, also of Leeds, enjoying a pint of beer at a Leeds Branch Annual Dinner in the 1970s.

The picture below shows J. Askwith and Chris Wright at close quarters during a Leeds Branch celebration.



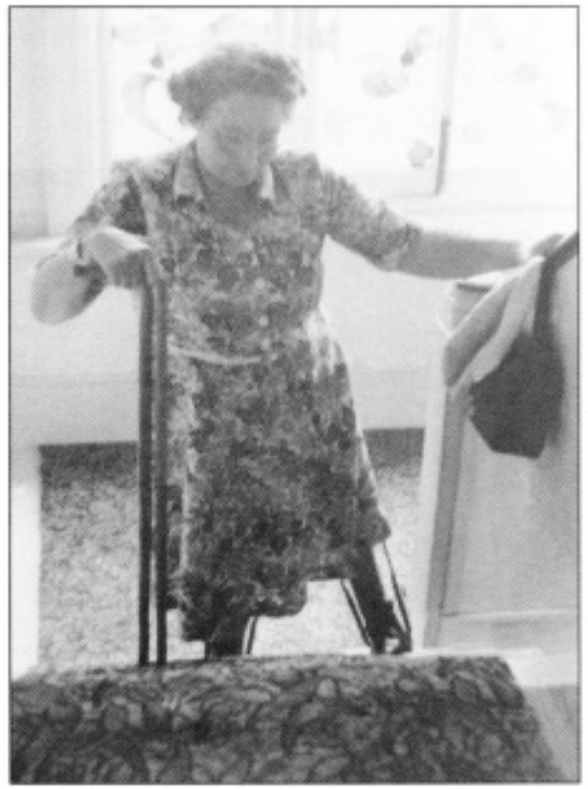
Entertainment was always important in Fellowship Life. Some branches had their own Concert Party. The picture above shows the *Nitwits* from Leeds Branch.
Always up with the times, a Scottish skiffle group came and played to young members of the Lanarkshire Branch when this type of music was all the rage.

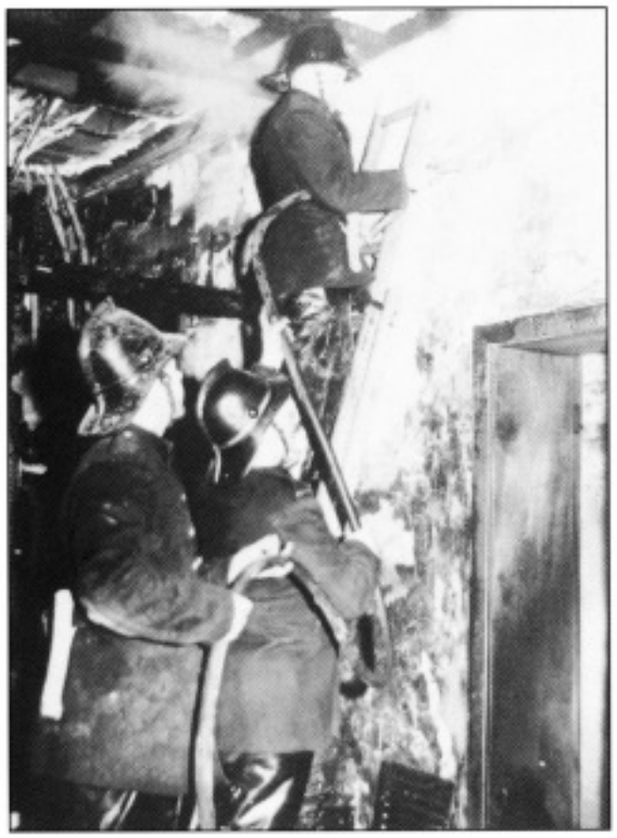
For many people the Fellowship's hotel at Worthing was a 'magic' Lantern for they had such wonderful holidays there. Important contributors to the atmosphere were Bill and June Finch seen (above) here with Bill's brother John.

The Lantern magic certainly worked for two visitors - Andrew and Nancy Robertson pictured below on their wedding day, 7 September 1957, they having met at the Lantern a few years earlier.

The Worthing Lantern hotel was opened by Air Marshall Sir John Slessor, pictured (left) at the Opening ceremony with Frederic Morena in the background.

The way it was...
The Worthing Lantern was opened without any adaptions for people with disabilities - it originally had no lift, ramped access, or wheelchair-accessible bathrooms.
Pictured (right) is a visitor making her way up the stairs.





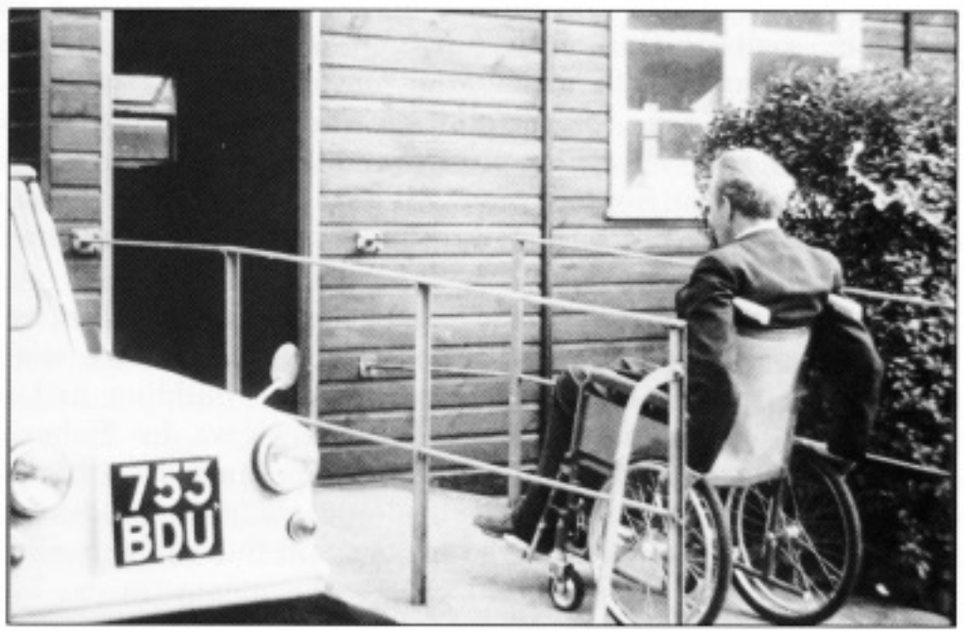
Left:
A calamity at Newcastle! A major fire damaged the hostel but Fellowship members rallied round and residents were found accommodation locally and Christmas card distribution was only slightly affected.

Below:
The 'little red bus' that was donated to Harrow Branch in memory of Dudley Chapman who was the inspiration behind the early Christmas card scheme.

More scenes from the Fellowship's work projects.

Left: Flora Hope working at Ruislip.

Below: Arriving for work at the ramped main entrance of the Newcastle workshop.



the events they provided for their members. Sheffield Branch, having a relatively large number of disabled boys, started a polio Scout Troop in 1954. Meeting fortnightly in an upstairs room in central Sheffield, the Troop relied on a number of volunteer drivers to bring the lads into meetings and carry some of them up the stairs! The Troop was run just as any Scout Troop would having camps and a whole range of activities.

Christmas was always a special time for the branches. At Mansfield in 1953 they had a wonderful time, there being a hundred and forty at the party including a group of youngsters who had a table to themselves on which the main attraction was a giant cracker full of surprises. Mimi Morena was there and ably led the celebrations. A magician came too and caused howls of laughter as he poured milk into Tom Rowley's hat. The children learned that saying (shouting actually) the word *"abracadabra"* would result in wonderful things happening, the greatest of these being the arrival of Father Christmas. One commentator on the event suggested that for "those folk who consider polios to be invalids who need gentle, quiet amusement, this party would not be recommended".

Somewhere to work and somewhere to live

A major milestone on Tyneside was the opening of a hostel by the Newcastle branch. On 22 September 1956 the brain-child of Joe Fisher became a reality. This was not, though, just a place in which people could live; it provided that other vital necessity of life - work. The Newcastle centre had a training workshop where people could learn a trade and then, if it was the right thing to do, move on to a job in mainstream society. One such person was Maureen McKenzie, paralysed by polio in both arms, who moved from Scotland to the Newcastle hostel to take up a training course. She stayed for some years, became an experienced telephonist and then went on to take a job in the city and to obtain her own home. "It gave me confidence", she says of the Newcastle project, a sentiment that was echoed by many over the years.

The Newcastle hostel was made possible by a major effort by the students of King's College who donated the whole of one year's Rag Appeal income to this single project. Once the building had been purchased (at a preferential price from the local vicar), Joe Fisher used his skill and determination to get everything organised at the lowest possible price. Manufacturers and tradespeople gave products and services at cost, the architect waived his fee, and the whole project was completed within the budget of £13,322 - the money raised by the

students.

A near-disaster occurred in January 1959 when, in the depths of the night, the hostel was engulfed by fire. Thankfully the well-rehearsed evacuation procedures worked perfectly and no-one was injured. The residents were found alternative accommodation at the Lantern hotels and in the homes of private individuals. The work was transferred to other premises whilst reconstruction took place to allow the hostel and factory to reopen on 24 April 1960. To mark the occasion a framed certificate bearing the first four Christmas cards produced by the Fellowship was presented and still hangs in the lobby of the Newcastle branch headquarters.

A major resource

At the height of its production the Newcastle project was marketing Christmas cards and other material, creating a wide range of posters and making polio collecting boxes. In 1959 some 9,000,000 Christmas cards and 80,000 Advent Calendars were marketed by the project's twenty-two polio-disabled employees creating a turn-over of some £100,000 (this would be worth some £1.5 million at 1999 prices).

Joe Fisher acted as the volunteer buyer, Alan Greenwell was the manager and trainer, and, as well as raising much-needed funds, the Newcastle project proved a most vital point. People who were regarded as unemployable by reason of their disability were receiving orders, packing, dispatching, invoicing, banking and accounting. The places at which people worked were adapted to their needs, steps made into slopes, benches raised or lowered, and people who were thought useless in other spheres were proving their worth, earning a living and growing in personal dignity.

The Newcastle project became well-known and people from all over the country came to see how they did these remarkable things. The knowledge the visitors carried away with them helped to create employment opportunities for others in Britain (and, indeed, all over the world), helping many thousands of people with disabilities to obtain employment and independence.

After the closure of the Christmas card scheme due to increased competition, part of the premises at Newcastle became redundant. Never ones to let a resource stand idle, the branch entered into negotiations with a Housing Society which acquired the land, demolished the old buildings and, on 23 April 1985, opened a block of warden-supervised flatlets which incorporated a meeting room and offices for the branch.

Knowing that the provision of employment opportunities was a vital task, in 1956 the Wolverhampton, Dudley and District branch opened, at their George Street premises, an employment project which enabled people to become rehabilitated into the routine of getting to work, carrying out tasks, and dealing with their own money - all vital factors if one is going to convince an employer that one is just the right person to fill that job.

Getting away from it all

Right from the very beginning the provision of holidays was an important item on the Fellowship's agenda. As soon as the war finished moves were made to acquire a holiday home. In the late 1940s there were plans to take over a building at Clacton which was no longer required by John Groom's Crippleage but these did not come to fruition. However, in 1949, the *Lantern Hotel* at Worthing was purchased: more of this later. The problem facing many members was that holidays were expensive and very few hotels had facilities for people who used wheelchairs or who had limited mobility. Many branches rose to the challenge and organised branch holidays in various parts of the country.

One trip that was amazing in its organisation was the visit by a group from Newcastle to the Festival of Britain in 1951. Disabled people were not really expected at that time to move around very much but thirty-four polio-disabled members along with eight helpers travelled down to London on the overnight sleeper (getting into and out of the upper bunks on a moving train was fun and games). A bus was hired but much of London was closed to coaches at this special time. An approach was made to the Metropolitan Police who not only gave permission for the bus to go into the West End but also sent a motorcycle outrider to accompany the bus. The group stayed at the Shaftesbury Hotel, dined at Lyons Corner House, went to the Palladium Ttheatre for a variety show, and took a tour of floodlit London late at night. What a weekend!

Summertime in Cornwall is a delight and many branches and regions have been to visit Newquay over the years. Although the town has many steep hills and does not seem to lend itself immediately to the needs of people with impaired mobility, it has proved to be a popular destination. As well as enjoying the sun and the beach visitors would take part in the nightly entertainment including fancy dress, sing-songs, bingo, and even a knobbly-knees contest. This must have been the leg-show to beat all leg shows as many polio people tend to have

rather slim legs - the competition must have been intense!

Something for the children

The large numbers of children who were members of the Fellowship in the 1950s and '60s were a challenge to every branch. These young people needed a special type of fellowship and so it was that theWolverhampton branch formed the first Children's Section under the enthusiastic leadership of Paddy Gibbs and Anne Gibbs (no relation).

Early in 1950 Patricia Carey had started a children's page in *The Bulletin*, signing herself *"Aunty Pat"*. This led to letters from two young members and fostered a new chapter in the life of the Fellowship. By 1952 Auntie Pat had nearly a thousand 'nephews and nieces' who would write to her and receive letters of encouragement. Some of the published letters made sad reading, a child telling how she had been in hospital for four years but was hoping to go home soon: "I am affected in my arms and legs and back, but do very well", and "The doctor has told me I can leave my iron off now". Seeing letters such as these weas valuable not just for the senders but for many hundreds of children who were in hospital or determined to walk with calipers. They were important, too, for parents who were so often committed to encouraging their children to try harder, giving them exercise each day and spending many hours travelling to hospital for physiotherapy.

Aunty Pat's mailbag did not just contain letters from the young. Mum and Dad wrote too, to ask advice on whether a child should go to a special school, advice about special schools, frustration over the child's readjustment to the home environment after years in hospital, and how to answer Junior's questions about why he could not walk when his friends ran and jumped all day long.

One ever-popular part of Aunty Pat's page was the story of 'Presteege' the Hedgehog and his family the Inky Pinky Finkies (illustrated with her own charming cartoons). Presteege finally retired in September 1964 having, for six years, been written from Rhodesia to whence Patricia Carey emigrated in 1958. In early 1959 Patricia suggested in a *Bulletin* article that the name of Presteege be changed. Subsequent editions of the newsletter contained a series of horrified letters that soon put paid to that suggestion. The somewhat unusual spelling of the name of the hedgehog in the scarf came about because it was originally intended to market a toy hedgehog with the name as a fund-raiser. When the toy was taken for patent registration it was found that another doll had the name and so the spelling was changed. The toy hedgehogs never reached the market but the name remained.

Despite the very important role that Patricia Carey played in the formation and development of the Fellowship she remained somewhat in the background before her emigration to Rhodesia. She lived in central London near the Gray's Inn Road and is remembered by one of her many 'nieces' as having an enormous ginger cat called Hodge. Visits to Aunty Pat's house were always fun but hindsight showed that as well as entertaining the youngsters she was quietly acting as a great source of inspiration and encouragement to the parents. Although not greatly disabled through polio she needed to use a wheelchair quite a lot and was somewhat frail in health - it was for this reason that she forsook the British climate to return to southern Africa

What a day.....!

In Sunderland they had eighty-six children in membership in the early 1960s and Pat Wyper decided to take a group of about half of them for a holiday. She chose the Youth Hostel at Wooler - not too far away and everyone had a really great time. So much so that these holidays became an annual event and the people of the village really looked forward to the polio children's arrival. They would put on special events and visit the hostel to entertain the youngsters during the evenings.

A highlight of the holiday was the bus trip to Holy Island which can only be reached by a causeway at low tide. Each year the same bus driver would be allocated to the trip and he became a firm friend of the children who, as they drove over the causeway, would taunt him to drive on the wrong side of the marker posts and into the water. One year the shouts of glee as the bus splashed through the briny turned to a groan of disappointment as the engine on the bus cut out and the vehicle ground to a halt with all four wheels in the water. It would not start, no matter how much the driver tried; the children were becoming impatient and so were allowed off the bus to play on the sand until things could be sorted out. "Don't take your calipers off until I tell you" shouted Pat, to no avail as straps were undone and boots taken off.

Still there was no life in the bus and time was moving on. The causeway is covered at high tide and the flow had already started. Just then Pat looked towards Holy Island and saw a fleet of cars coming towards them. The residents had seen their dilemma and were coming to the rescue. Just as the cars arrived, so did the rain and it was forty-five very wet children who arrived at Holy Island a few minutes later. A tractor had been sent to tow the bus to dry land, the driver slipped a tow rope around the bus's bumper, took the strain, and the bumper flew off with a great clatter!

On arriving at Holy Island the children were taken to the church hall to dry off. The vicar's wife went into the jumble sale stock and brought out a selection of clothes for the youngsters to wear whilst their own dried off. Some of those kids went home in far better clothes than the ones in which they set out on that eventful morning.

The epilogue to this story took place in 1997. Pat Wyper was at a reunion and this incident was being discussed. It was only then that she discovered that the reason for the bus's breakdown was one of the boys in the group had turned off the fuel stop tap at the back of the vehicle - a well-kept secret!

Growing up

But sweet young children in frilly frocks or short trousers grow older, get spots, and become teenagers. So, as the child membership increased in years the Fellowship, under the inspiration of Dudley Chapman, inaugurated the Youth Section. In September 1951 a Youth Conference was held at Avon Tyrell, Christchurch, Hampshire, under the chairmanship of Marjorie Tait, Ph.D.

The decisions made by this ground-breaking conference laid important foundations for the integration of able-bodied and disabled young people in Britain, for it was seen that, although branch youth groups might initially comprise only polio-disabled young people, it was important that able-bodied youngsters should be encouraged to join. Such a strategy would be very important to those teenagers who attended residential schools for people with disabilities during the week and only came home at weekends. Through such an initiative new friendships would be forged and a more complete person built.

As a result of the Avon Tyrell Conference, the Pilot Youth Club was started in January 1952 with thirty-five members. Meeting in the Church Hall at Woburn Square in central London on alternate Thursdays, the Club was intended to be a prototype for many other clubs all over the country. Members of Rotary and Round Table clubs brought young people aged between 17 and 23 to meetings which were led by a professional youth worker. The range of activities was large. Noel Bell, the Chairman in 1956, gives a taste of the atmosphere of the Club when he speaks of some difficulties encountered during a visit to the Monkey House at London Zoo, but "we had a heck of a time sorting out the residents from the visitors when we left, so we weren't surprised to find we had two members short (they're still on show, no-one's the wiser!). On another occasion the Club visited India House where, those who could "take it" were served with real Indian food. He felt that the most

successful evening of the year was - dancing! Any doubts we had regarding its suitability for polios were soon dispelled when crutches and walking sticks were left in the corner whilst their owners tripped the Light Fantastic.

Noel goes on to explain that the Club members take their place at work and home with able-bodied people and so why not at play? It was attitudes such as this, fostered and encouraged by the Fellowship, that helped many disabled young people to grow into active and able members of society who just happen to have a paralysed leg or use a wheelchair.

A teenager's newsletter, *'Porcupine'* was produced in the early 1950s and enjoyed a national circulation during a fairly short life. The Teen Page in *The Bulletin* reached all members and included young people's letters, hints on activities (a series on how to play the trumpet being one) and a fiction section which encouraged teenagers to submit their own stories. A number of polio people went on to be successful writer; it may be that this opportunity early in life fostered a number of literary careers.

In the early 1950s the Fellowship became acutely aware of the responsibilities it had to young people. At the time there was no sign of a vaccine, polio was perceived as being around for all time and the number of cases was increasing - two-thirds of them being children. Initiatives like the Pilot Youth Club, *Porcupine*, Auntie Pat, Children's Sections of branches, all helped to provide better services for an increasing number of young disabled people and their families.

Being a local organisation

The branch structure allowed the Fellowship to reach the ordinary polio-disabled person in his or her home town. It encouraged people to meet and to offer mutual support, it provided welfare, a social life, and encouragement to stand up to the challenge of disability. Schemes like the Newcastle Hostel, branch holidays, and the children's and youth sections helped polio-disabled people to grow and develop despite their handicaps. The result of all this is that many people who would be considered by some to be 'polio victims' have grown up to lead normal lives, to have families, good jobs and active social lives. There are stories of a few such people elsewhere in this book.

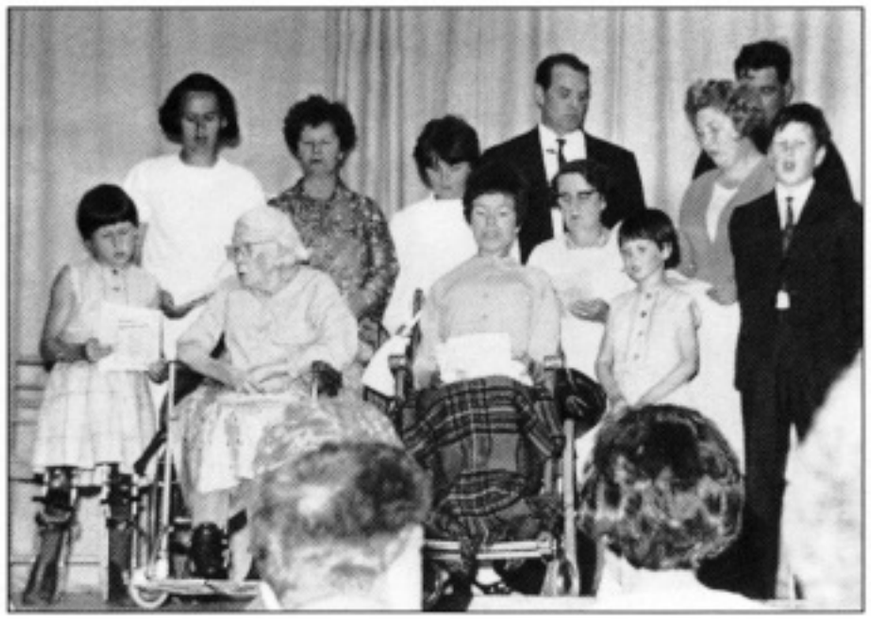
By being local and encouraging polio-disabled people to create and operate their own branches, the Fellowship became an important motivational force in many thousands of lives.

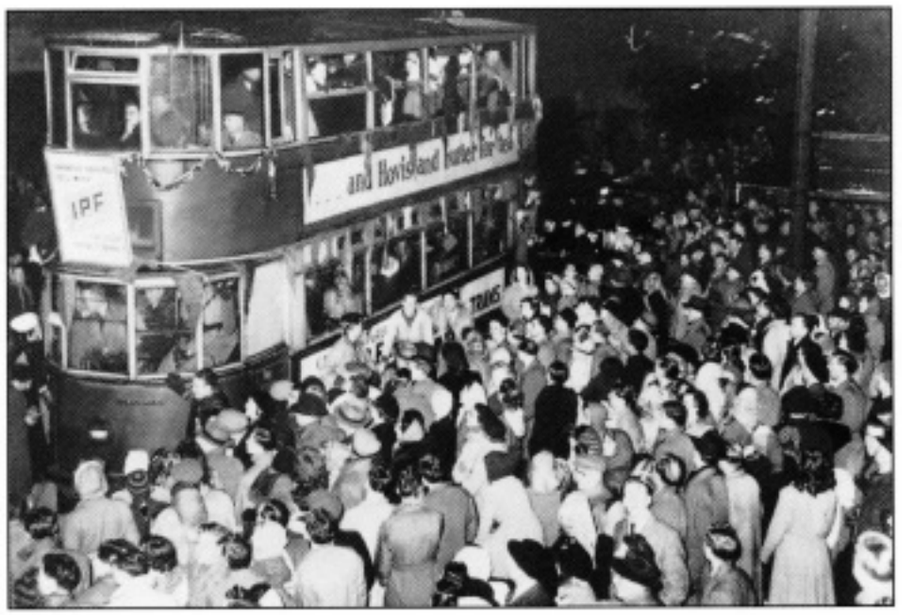
Christmas wasn't just a time for parties - the Fellowship made a great deal of money from selling Christmas Cards and other seasonal items. The top picture was taken at Ruislip, which was the original home of the Christmas Card Scheme, and the bottom picture shows the workshop at Newcastle to which the scheme transferred.

Christmas party time in two Branches
Above: Celebrations in Lincoln in January 1955
Below: Lanarkshire Branch children have a special time.

The Branches sometimes took a campaigning stance, here we see the Birmingham Branch out in force to try to persuade people to be vaccinated against polio.

(below)
Talent abounds in the Branches as Wakefield demonstrated in the *Top Branch* competition.



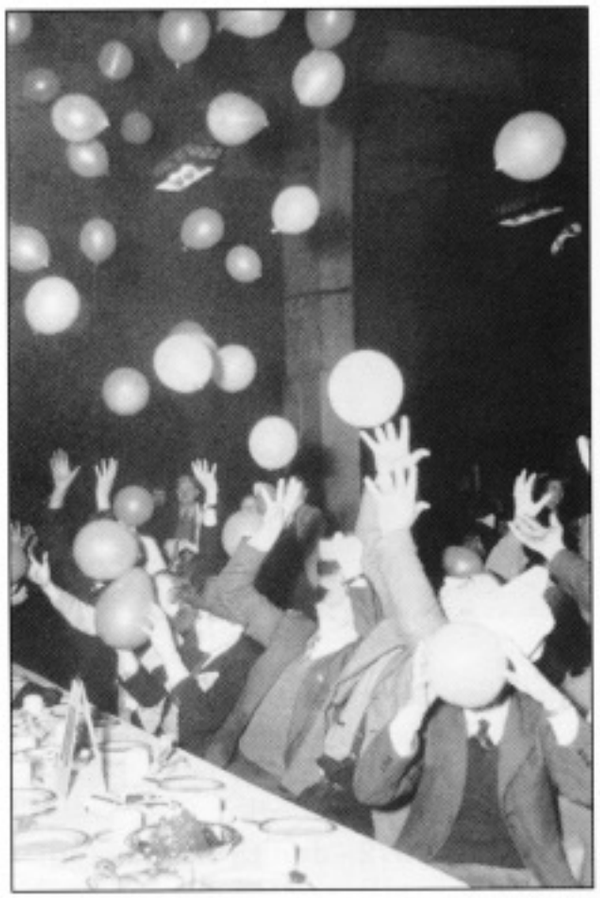


The Fellowship's roots have always been its Branches, and the Branches have always had an interesting life of their own. On 7 April 1951 the last tram ran through Croydon and the local Branch used the occasion to raise funds.

Entertaining ourselves is also a prominent theme in many Branches, below we see M. Brooks and S. Heaton in a Leeds Branch pantomime.

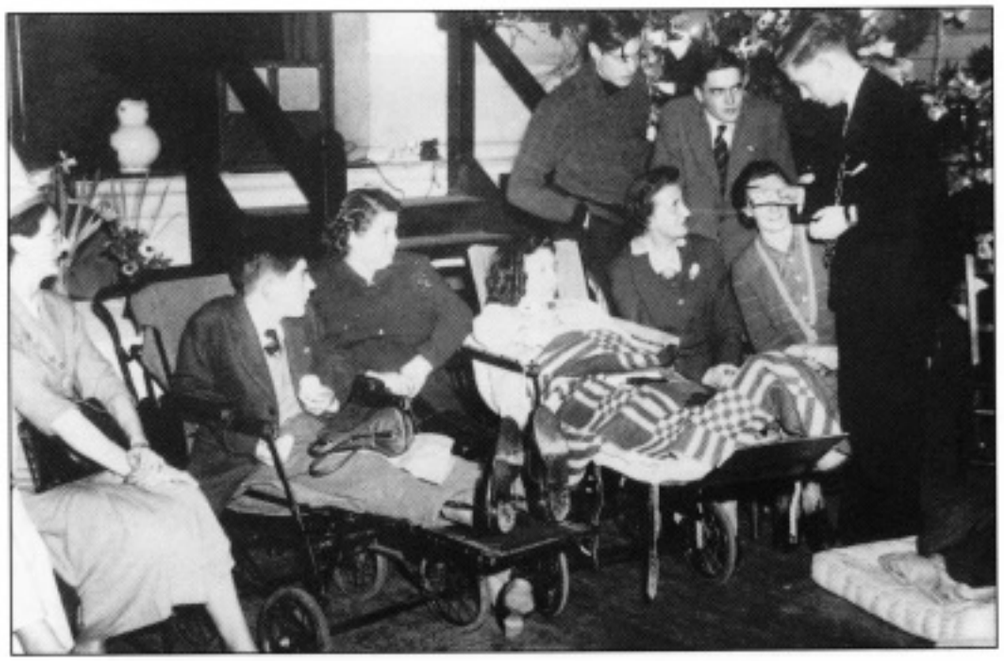
Another Leeds panto, this time Sleeping Beauty with Geoffrey Lax, Bob Hendley, Alan Cockerton, Pat Hunt, and Angela Stafford.

(below)
At the Yorkshire Region Rally on 15 July 1972 - Judith Dinnington, Janet Somersall, and Kevin Ryan.



"Here come the balloons", a time of much merriment at a National Christmas Party.

(below)
The Branches always tried to hold their own Christmas Party. One of the earliest to do so was the Mansfield (Portland) Branch. here we see the magician intriguing his audience at the Branch's party in 1949.



Chapter 7. An emerging structure

As the Fellowship developed there was an increasing need for regulation of the way in which things worked. Shortly after activity resumed in earnest when the war had finished it became obvious that the Fellowship was going to become the main national organisation working on behalf of people who had been affected by polio and who comprised one of the largest groups in the disabled population.

When the Fellowship was inaugurated a simple Deed of Trust setting out the objectives was agreed. During the war years people were too preoccupied with other matters to formally constitute the new organisation, but in 1947 this omission was remedied by the adoption at a public meeting of a more carefully-planned Deed.

A new home

Originally and up to August 1947 the Fellowship operated from the Morenas' home at 18 Nassau Street in central London. As the organisation grew so the need for more space became obvious. With a membership of 2,200, 1947 saw the move to a converted shop at 37 Tavistock Place, London. This was on the ground floor, making access much easier and, having a shop front and, being in a busy part of the capital, provided Mimi Morena with plenty of opportunity to sell goods to raise funds.

In 1948 Frederic Morena became the paid Secretary of the Fellowship but all other posts were filled by volunteers. He remained a major driving force of the Fellowship until his retirement on 21 September 1957. He was awarded the OBE in 1956.

In January 1960 Frederic was booked by the BBC to do a radio talk on the Fellowship and was taken along to the 'recording studios' only to find that an elaborate deception had been woven and he was the subject of a *This is Your Life* programme. Hosted by Eamonn Andrews, whose wife was also affected by polio, the "big red book" gave details of Frederic's stage career before polio, his successful shows in Ireland, the onset of polio during filming of a film entitled *Atlantis*, his meeting with Patricia Carey, and the founding of the Fellowship. Many personalities from the Fellowship were brought on stage to recount their experiences

with Frederic, the most surprising being Patricia Carey herself who had been flown all the way from Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). The timing of the programme, just a few days before the Fellowship's 21st anniversary, was most apt for Frederic died on 6 December that year at the age of 70.

Raising the wind.

Money was always a source of challenge. Georgie Wood's *March of Bobs* was a useful source of income but other innovations were needed. A stroke of genius in the late 1940s led to the Fellowship printing and selling its own Christmas Cards - probably the first voluntary organisation in Britain to do so; the profit for this first year was £75. The original designs were the work of Roy Marsden, a member from Coventry who, shortly after creating the cards, emigrated to the United States of America. The first volunteer selling agent was Phyllis Parratt who really started something!

Roy Marsden became closely involved with the *March of Dimes* in the USA and for a number of years acted as the Fellowship's ambassador to America.

The opportunities presented by the Christmas card idea were quickly seen by Dudley Chapman who took over the printing of the Fellowship's cards and the scheme just grew and grew. With a large national membership and a network of branches all over Britain, Christmas cards soon became a major source of income; in 1952 the turnover was £14,000. The great attraction was that branches could order in bulk at wholesale rates and so raise funds for themselves whilst still helping the Fellowship centrally. As well as Christmas cards, Dudley Chapman printed birthday cards, envelope stickers, and all manner of other items.

Dudley Chapman's business flourished and he was able to build new premises to his own wheelchair-accessible design in South Ruislip on a cul-de-sac called The Runway - where the Fellowship's present-day offices are situated.

A great shock came when Dudley Chapman died suddenly at the height of his Fellowship fund-raising abilities. The printing works could no longer produce the cards but the funds were still needed. Looking around for a new supplier, the committee contacted Joe Fisher who was looking after the Newcastle hostel and training centre - could cards be distributed from there? The answer was in the affirmative and so the role of the Newcastle workshop changed. Not only did Christmas cards come from here but all manner of printed items. If a branch was holding a garden party then posters could be printed at a very favourable price;

do you need collecting boxes then look no further than Newcastle. The combination of residential accommodation, training and gainful employment made the Newcastle centre a most important asset of the Fellowship.

So many ideas....

The members of the National Committee came up with a number of innovative fundraising schemes over the years. These were often operated through the branches who were able to take a share of the income for their own use.

One such scheme was *Polio Post Week* which was started in 1951. Thiswas a scheme whereby members would sell envelope stickers forsupporters to attach to their mail during the designated seven days. Each recipient of *The Bulletin* was sent thirty stickers for sale at one penny each and asked to pay two shillings (10 pence) to national funds, the remainder being an allowance for the cost of postage and the postal order. The slogan for the promotion was an acronym Publicity Overcomes Lethargy In Others Please Order Seals Then Work Eagerly, Energetically, Keenly - POLIO POST WEEK.

A different Handicap!

Another groundbreaking idea was the National Polio Handicap. The word 'handicap' in this instance had nothing to do with the disabling effects of polio but was taken from horse-racing terminology. The aim was to "race" to raise the highest value of coins placed over a one-hundred yard course but each branch was "handicapped" according to the population statistics for its area, the idea being that a small town would have as much chance as the metropolis.

The first trial run took place on 1 June 1957 and the event was successfully operated for the following few years. As so often with Fellowship activities, the 'race' itself was staged in a very public place with the maximum of publicity. Celebrities would often be asked to start the event by laying the first coin and, of course, the people in the crowd would be very keen to place their donations and help the branch to create the best possible total along the distance.

Over successive years top-scoring branches included High Barnet which, in 1957, collected £91/5/0d (£91.25) in seven-and-a-half minutes with the help of Norman Wisdom. Just across town in East Barnet, Winifred Atwell was helping the branch to raise£65/10/0d (£65.50) in six-and-a-half minutes. The greatest amount collected on this year was in Dewsbury which amassed £128 in eighty minutes whilst Oswestry

encountered an unusual problem on a very hot day - the coins stuck to the tarmac of the road surface. Valiant volunteer Berwyn Evans took the cash home that evening and spent Sunday cleaning it all up before it went to the bank on Monday.

Tin-rattling

Another old chestnut for Fellowship fund-raising was the Flag Day. From the 1950s many local high streets were graced on Saturdays by Fellowship members with their collecting boxes and trays of flags. Most Flag Days were organised locally by branches but nationally-fostered events took place too, such as the Metropolitan Flag Day which aimed to have flag sellers on every high street in London. Such events took a great deal of organisation but paid off with plenty of cash in the coffers; in 1957 the national target for Flag Days was £30,000.

Making appeals

The broadcasting media were also keen to help and on 28 December 1947 Miss Richmal Crompton, the author of the *Just William* stories and herself disabled by polio, went on BBC radio to appeal for the Fellowship as *The Week's Good Cause*. As well as raising a lot of money, this broadcast did sterling work in lifting the profile of the Fellowship. Just about everybody in Britain knew about polio but not so many knew that there was an organisation dedicated to helping those whom it had affected. Richmal Crompton was very popular at the time and her words were so well-received that the Appeal was broadcast again a number of times over the following few weeks - a most unusual occurrence.

Other broadcasts were made over the years by well-known supporters, Wilfred Pickles in November 1952, and later Brian Epstien and Bryan Forbes.

As the number of branches increased - by 1956 there were eighty-six, a new tier of organisation became necessary and so the Regions were created. The first was Yorkshire which was inaugurated on 29 May 1953 and quickly started a tradition of large rallies, the first being at Harewood House in September 1954.

Scotland was another area that quickly acquired a flourishing regional organisation and which saw the rally as an important activity. The first of these was held at Alloa House on Whit Sunday 1957. Some five hundred polio-disabled people and their families attended to enjoy the wonderful gardens, try their hand at archery, and compete in a wide range of games. Edward Cartwright came the sixty-four miles from Dundee in a three-wheeler, the journey taking him about three hours -

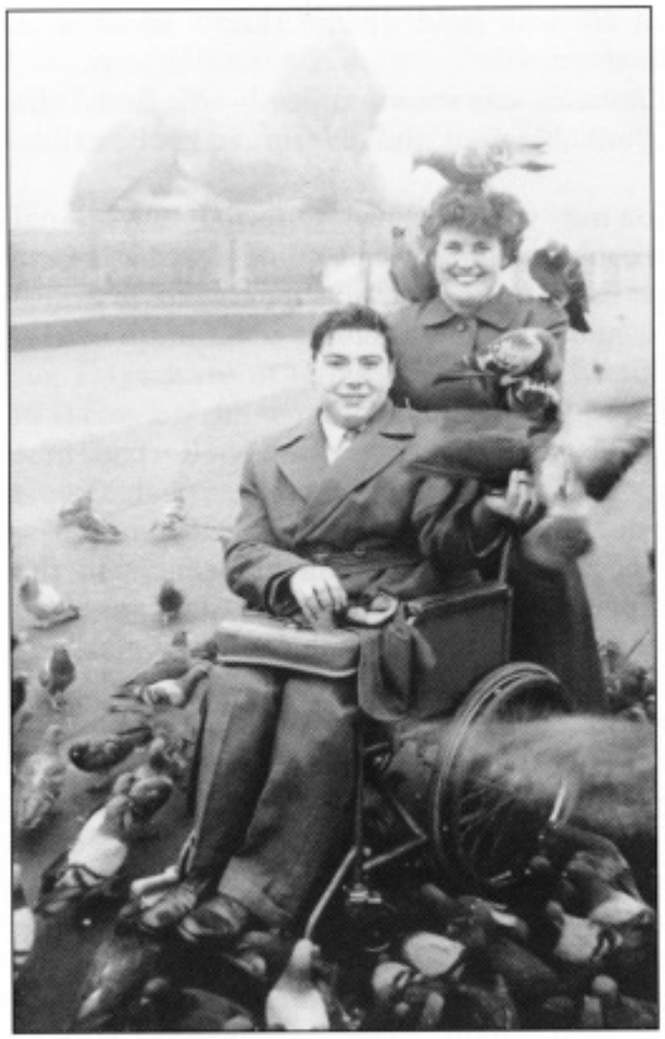
it would have been less but he was held up for thirty minutes in Glendevon by a torrential hailstorm

In June 1954, Wendy Williamson was crowned Scotland's first Polio Queen, starting a tradition of 'ennoblement' that continued at the rallies for a number of years.

Gradually, over the following years, there followed a regional structure that now covers the country and gives people a closer access to larger events. Most Regions have a life of their own and organise holidays, sports competitions, and trips out thereby widening horizons for branches and members alike.

In order to mould the Fellowship throughout the country a series of national conferences were held in the years after 1950. The first gathering took place in Nottingham on 6 and 7 May of that year. People came from all over Britain, including two from Northern Ireland. The delegates visited Harlow Wood Hospital, an important centre in the treatment of many Midlands people who had had polio, and were very impressed by the extensive range of up-to-the-minute physiotherapy equipment.

The conference proper gave opportunities for many to air their pet theories on the organisation of the Fellowship and the improvement of facilities for polio-disabled people. The regionalisation of the country was agreed and other major decisions taken as with all conferences of this nature, be they national, regional, or concentrated on specialist subjects such as welfare, young people, or even Christmas cards, the main benefit was being able to meet with people who shared in one's own concerns, faced one's own challenges, and had the welfare of people with polio at heart.



Getting out and about was a favourite activity of Fellowship members.

The picture on the left shows Jean and Steve of Manchester Branch posing for the camera in Trafalgar Square when in London for a National Swimming Gala.

Many members had their own transport and these were often three-wheelers issued by the Ministry of Health. The picture below shows a trike outing from Walsall Branch.

Some Fellowship members were ennobled!

Elizabeth Smith is crowned Polio Queen (above) and Helen Couttie becomes Polio Princess at the Scottish Region Rally in 1972. Alick McMullen is officiating.

A classic moment captured by the camera (left).

Paddy Gibbs lays down the law to R. Thurz at the 1960 Annual General Meeting.

Chapter 8. Enjoying ourselves

One of the greatest characteristics of the Fellowship over the years has been the ability of the members to enjoy themselves. After all, that is really what fellowship is all about - to enjoy the company of another. The very first gatherings of the fledgling Fellowship were meetings in tea houses to chat and get to know each other. At the end of the very first year the Fellowship held a Christmas party despite the fact that there was a war on.

Frederic was always proud that it was his suggestion that a national Christmas party should be held in the capital. Initially his idea was not well received by the Executive Committee of the time, who thought that this was not the correct way in which to spend the Fellowship's money. Frederic took the opposite view; that a coming-together in celebration of Christmas was an excellent way in which to promote welfare amongst members, and eventually, his view prevailed.

He was right, of course, and for many people it was a highlight of the year. Indeed, for some the effects of the party lasted very much longer. Eric Footit met a young lady, Nell, at the Seymour Hall party in 1953 and they were married three years later. In 1998 they celebrated their forty-second wedding anniversary.

The first 'proper' party was held at the York Hotel, Berners Street in 1946. There had, of course been an event in 1939 but this was a party held by a small, newly-formed Fellowship; in the immediate post-war years, things had become very different.

Frederic Morena always had vivid memories of the 1946 party. He described it as "chaos from the word go!" 200 guests were expected but 400 turned up. Tom Rowley came rushing up to Frederic saying that more tables were needed, "Well get 'em" rejoined Frederic - and Tom did! Mimi Morena did the catering and baked a cake that seemed a monster in those days, but was just a minnow compared to the two hundredweight confections of later years. In 1946 the cake was cut up by Alderman Steel, and he had blistered hands at the end to show what a mammoth task it was.

Right at the beginning, the Fellowship started a tradition of bringing top-calls entertainers to the Christmas party; in 1946 there were Jerry

Willmott, the radio presenter, Georgie Wood (of course), and Pouishnoff, the concert pianist.

The National Christmas Party became the main central gathering of Fellowship members each year - on 25 January 1953 over 1400 people crowded into the New Horticultural Hall in London to celebrate the festive season. The event needed over two hundred helpers and eighty Rover Scouts and Ranger Guides acted as wheelchair pushers and stewards.

National Christmas Parties were primarily for adults - but the children wanted their own event and so the National Children's Party was born. The year 1951 saw a hundred and fifty children gathering at Seymour Hall with Coco the Clown, whilst in 1952 the event took place at the Friend's Meeting House in Euston Road, London. Some two hundred and fifty children attended and were entertained by Peter Butterworth as well as having a wonderful tea.

A home of our own

Many branches purchased their own buildings so that members could come together every day of the week. Examples of these initiatives were to be found in Sunderland whose building was opened on 24 April 1956 and Tees-side, whose new headquarters was opened by Frederic Morena in June 1960.

Birmingham branch acquired a magnificent building at 13 Westbourne Road, right next door to the Botanical Gardens in the city. The headquarters provided a wide range of rooms for activities for all ages and was open to members every day of the week, with the exception of the fourth Sunday afternoon which was the warden's half-day off!

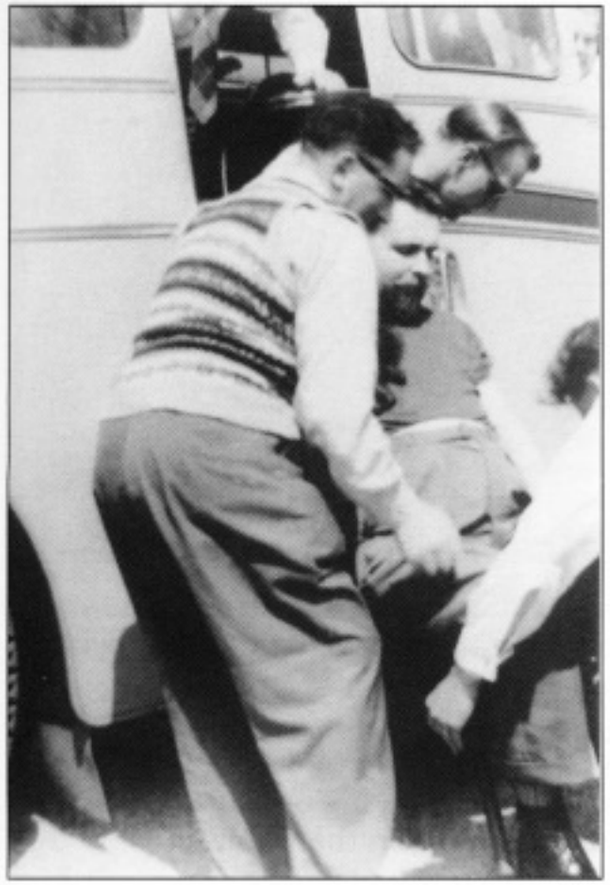
Leading lights in the branch's success were its founder, Edna Collins, and the long-time branch secretary, Walter Treadwell, known affectionately as 'Treader'. Living in the flat on site he would always be there to open up, welcome, help out, organise, and do the thousand-and-one jobs that were necessary before closing up for the night.

The Lantern

Right from the very beginnings the problems faced by people with disabilities in going away for a holiday were recognised and the Fellowship set itself the target of providing a holiday home. The first scheme, to open a centre at Clacton, fell through in 1947 and for the following years money was raised against the day when the right premises could be found. In late 1949 a hotel came on to the market in Shelley Road, Worthing. Members of the committee went to investigate

Members of the Fellowship like nothing more than a party!

Here we see three members taking to the dance floor and tripping the Light Fantastic.



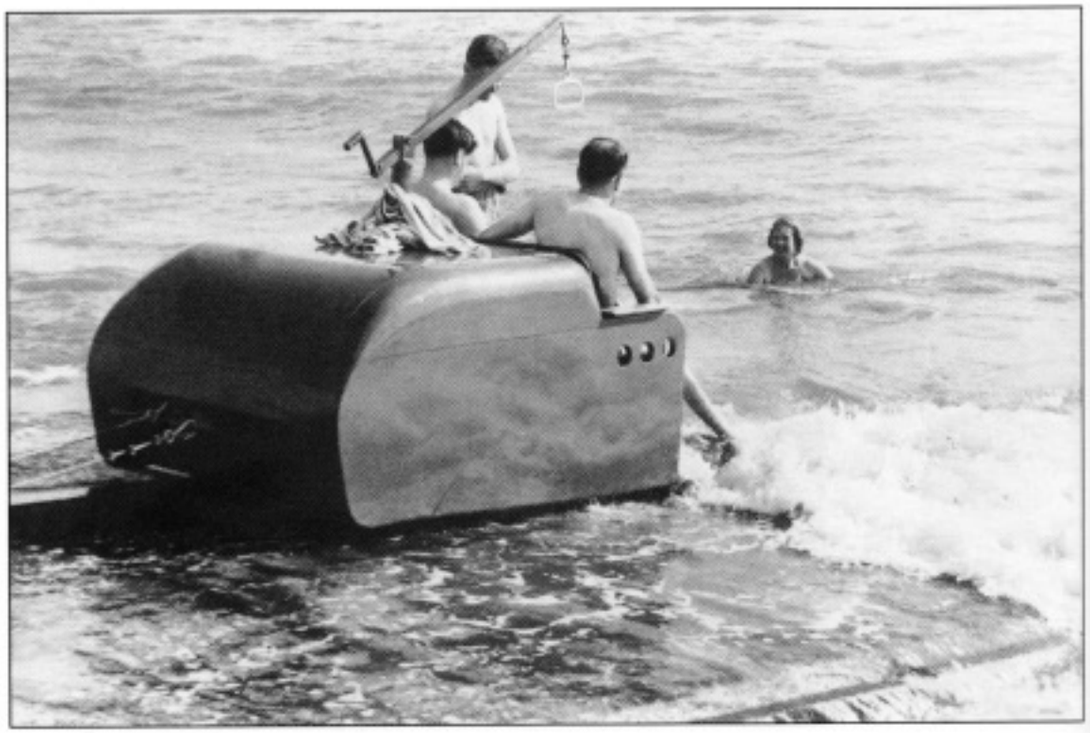
Getting onto the coach - the hard way and the easy way.

A member is lifted onto a coach whilst seated on an ordinary chair in the photograph (above) taken by a Junior Member of the Ilford, Barking, and Dagenham Branch.

Life for wheelchair-using coach passengers was made far easier at the Northern Lantern hotel by this useful ramp (below) donated by the Ribble Bus Company.

Above: The Northern Lantern hotel aimed to develop a family atmosphere. In the view above we see the wide age range of a typical group of guests.

Getting into the sea could be a problem for people with mobility problems. One enterprising resort provided this carriage (below) to help disabled bathers to and from the water.



Relaxing by the seaside - that was an important component of a holiday at the Worthing Lantern.
These two views show guests of the hotel taking their ease on the beach and in the garden of the hotel.

and found it to be just what they wanted. It had some ground-floor rooms but most were upstairs and there was no lift, but there was space to build one, it was in a quiet road not too far from the sea, and the price was right.

And so they decided to acquire the hotel. This was a great leap of faith for there was not enough money in the Holiday Home Fund to meet the purchase price, but a loan had been offered and was gladly taken up. One of the good things about the hotel was that it was fully operational, it had been put up for sale at the end of the season and did not need much attention to have it open for the following season. The purchase was announced in *The Bulletin* of February 1950 at which time a renewed appeal for funds was launched. Subsequent *Bulletins* told of developments and gave the opening date as Easter weekend 1950.

The new hotel needed a name, it was called *The Lantern* at the time of purchase. As people searched for a new name it seemed that the original name was really quite appropriate - after all, this was a new path along which the Fellowship was going and it needed a lantern to light the way, and there was no doubt that *The Lantern* would bring a lot of much-needed light into lives that had not had the benefit of a holiday for some years. The name would remain and has remained to this day.

The Lantern did indeed open at Easter and was full for its first week of operation.

The official opening took place on 5 April 1950 under the hand of Air Chief Marshall Sir John Slessor and in the company of a distinguished group of celebrities and members.

The Lantern was an immediate hit with the Fellowship and soon became a well-known holiday venue for people who had had polio. As time went on the building was made more accessible for people with mobility difficulties; a lift was installed in the summer of 1957, bathrooms and toilets were made larger and other important equipment provided. For many, the joy of *The Lantern* was simply being able to go on holiday knowing that one's disability would not be a bar to enjoyment. At a time when many holidays were taken in seaside boarding house converted from Victorian villas with steps, stairs, and small bathrooms, *The Lantern* was a real pleasure. Being in the company of other people who understood the disability was also good and many life-long friendship were started through a chance meeting at *The Lantern*.

Indeed, some 'friendships' became very permanent for a visit to *The Lantern* was, for some, the way in which a marriage was born. One such

couple were Andrew and Nancy Robertson who, having met on a trike drivers' holiday to Holland, corresponded for three years and then went on holiday to *The Lantern* together. Something very special must have happened during that time in Worthing for Nancy and Andrew were unable to get together more than twice in the following two years but were married in 1957.

They enjoyed a long and happy life together, had a son, and two grandsons. Nancy became very involved in work amongst people with disabilities, especially with the Prince of Wales' Advisory Group on Disability and was awarded the MBE.

Nancy and Andrew were very typical of the people who came to *The Lantern*; a picture elsewhere shows them in fancy dress, Andrew in highland dress made from a travelling rug and some of Nancy's underwear!

A holiday at *The Lantern* was full of such fun and the hotel soon developed into a real family venue. At first parents would bring their disabled children to Worthing; then, over the years, those same children now adults, would bring their families to a place where they knew they could get around using a wheelchair.

This was no summer-only hotel - it was open all the year round and always provided a very special programme at Christmas. In 1956, for example, the hotel was full of guests who enjoyed a fancy dress party on Christmas Eve, carol singers late at night, a trip to church on Christmas morning, a superb afternoon tea, a visit from Father Christmas, a blow-out Christmas Dinner followed by a party, and a visit to the pantomime on Boxing Day to watch the inimitable Gert and Daisy. As the members of the Fellowship grew and matured (and holiday habits changed) it became obvious that the regional role of *The Lantern* would have to change. Some members were ageing and there was a need for full-time residential accommodation. *Silverwood*, in Surrey was already providing some accommodation and it was decided to extend *The Lantern* to do likewise.

An extension into the rear garden was built in 1969; this provided ten en-suite rooms, some single, some for married couples, each having a door out into the grounds as well as being connected to the hotel for all its services. The extension was opened on 21 January 1970 by the Duchess of Norfolk and was seen as the first stage of the Fellowship's plan to provide accommodation for older members.

The second phase of development of *The Lantern Hotel* was opened in the summer of 1991. The existing extension into the rear garden had a second floor added, enabling the provision of more en-suite rooms for

residents. Bill and June Finch were the managers during the time of the building work and did sterling service for the residents by looking after them whilst the life of the hotel was disrupted by the construction. The Fellowship owned the building next door to the Lantern and so it was possible to house the ground-floor residents there whilst the work was underway. At some time during the works the dining-room was not available and people had to eat in their rooms, the staff bringing hot food to them wrapped in foil containers.

Those who had ground-floor rooms before the extension work were able to move back into them once the builders had left and found things much improved. Originally the ground-floor rooms had small gardens outside but these became impractical for older residents and so were replaced by paved areas with pot plants which were easier to manage.

The rooms had en-suite facilities but, in addition, bathrooms for those needing help had been installed, one bathroom having all the modern hoists yet still retaining a Victorian cast-iron bath and giving a very homely feel.

It was this 'homeliness' that was so much a characteristic of *The Lantern*, especially in the days of Bill and June Finch who started work at the hotel in March 1967; when the builders were making a mess of the place - they took the residents to their own home for Christmas Day.

And "up-north" too!

Provision of holiday accommodation became an important part of the Fellowship's activities. A further hotel was opened at 22 Clifton Drive, Lytham St. Anne's in 1956. This *Northern Lantern* provided a more accessible place to stay for people living in the north of England and, being quite close to Blackpool, had a very wide range of entertainments close at hand. The hotel provided a wide range of accommodation and, coming in the wake of the Fellowship's experience as a hotelier at Worthing, had many important facilities such as the lift and trike park installed right from the beginning. The venture, though, was not as enduring as its southern brother and closed in 1977.

Getting to places of interest was always a challenge for wheelchair users and buses fitted with tail lifts were very hard to come by in the 1950s. In an attempt to solve this dilemma the Ribble Bus Company presented a special wheelchair ramp to the Northern Lantern in 1960. This enormous device ran from the entrance to the hotel right into the bus at floor level and made access easy. Quite how the passengers got out of the bus at the other end is not known: perhaps it folded and the device went in the boot!

Over the years, holiday bungalows and caravans were provided for those who wanted a greater degree of independence. These were mainly the initiative of branches and provided relatively local self-catering holiday accommodation. The Leeds branch had two caravans in 1956, and there were also vans in the ownership of Guisborough and Ipswich branches.

The pioneering caravan

Provision for caravan holidays was made at Portsmouth for the use of people who used respirators. This scheme was a world first and made an enormous difference to the lives of people who were dependent on artificial means of breathing.

In 1959 Dr Brian Sandiford of the Priorsdean Hospital in Portsmouth was becoming increasingly sure that it would be possible for respirator-dependent people to live outside hospital. The medical profession (and, indeed, the patients themselves) were very sceptical and so Brian Sandiford decided to create a living proof. He contacted Mrs 'Billie' Green, the Secretary of the Portsmouth and Southsea branch of the Fellowship, and explained his plan to her. The notion was to convert a caravan on a public site into a holiday home for people who used iron lungs.

The project would take a great deal of determination from all involved, would cost about £2,000, and would make a real difference to the lives of those who believed that their degree of paralysis meant that they would never have a holiday again. The project was supported by the Fellowship nationally and it was decided to ask Gilbert Harding, the prominent broadcaster, to help via his Christmas appeal in *The People* newspaper. A donation of £1,000 was soon forthcoming and the rest of the money was raised by local and national effort.

The caravan (actually two caravans, the second being for additional family accommodation) were commissioned from Fairview Caravans of Essex who had to radically alter and strengthen an existing design. A local manufacturer made the interior furniture from cardboard in a modular form so that it was lightweight and could be moved around the caravan to accommodate the needs of the different types of respirator. Portsmouth City Council provided a site at Eastern Road overlooking Langstone Harbour, and Priorsdean Hospital committed itself to providing a twenty-four-hour back-up service from its main campus only a mile away.

The opening ceremony took place in May 1960 and on the same day the first visitor moved in. Heather Ruffell, a young lady from Essex was

delighted to be on holiday for the first time in years. Her father hosted an alfresco champagne party during the evening during which Heather moved off her wheelchair-carried cuirass respirator and into the iron lung - a necessity at that moment in time for, as the evening wore on she had become less and less 'concerned' about what was going on around her!

The caravans were used for seven seasons, during which they attracted worldwide interest and became a living proof that the responaut did not need the confines of a hospital ward. People's attitudes at all levels changed and the way was opened for respirator-dependent people to live in their own homes.

One delightful story is told about Joan Munn, then aged about 20, who was asked if there was anything she would like during her stay.

"Yes, a sailor!" was the instant reply. Undaunted, Brian Sandiford went down to the dockyard area, met with a likely-looking group of tars, and told them that he would like them to meet a young lady. Imagine their surprise when they met Joan, to whom they took an instant liking. Not one day of her holiday passed without a naval visit and later she was adopted as their ship's pin-up.

In 1966, Heather Ruffell had gained such confidence that she was able to take a trip to the United States and later marry. How much of this would have been possible if she had spent her life confined to a hospital ward?

As well as a series of caravans throughout the country, the Fellowship opened a holiday bungalow at Burnham-on-Sea in Somerset on 13 July 1963.

Over the ocean

Some people did not simply set their sights on having a holiday in Britain; they wanted to go further afield. Mimi Morena, Frederic's wife, became the organiser of a regular series of continental trips in the 1950s and 1960s.

On 31 May 1952 a group of Fellowship members assembled at Victoria Station in London to travel to Ostend for the first of these jaunts. A hotel had been found that had facilities for the party's disabilities and many special arrangements were made. The group were most impressed when, on the first morning, they arrived at the Town Hall for a reception with the Burgomaster of Ostend. A band of the Belgian Navy was playing and flags were flying everywhere. However, this was not for the IPF group - their arrival had coincided with a parade of ex-servicemen. For the polio group there was the daunting prospect of

a long flight of steps up to the Town Hall; the Belgians, though, had planned ahead, and despatched a crew of firemen to carry the visitors up the steep stairs.

Burgomaster Vroom made the group most welcome and plied them with champagne and cigarettes; the visit ended with a redering of *For he's a jolly good fellow* the volume of the singing being greatly helped by the champers!

Other attractions included a visit to the Second World War beaches of Dunkirk, the Thermal Institute, and a trip across the border to Middleburg in Holland. A highlight of the trip was a visit to Bruges which the group saw by night as well as from a canal boat.

In June 1954 Mimi Morena set her sights even higher and took her holiday party up, up, and away, by flying them to St. Malo, Brittany for a vacation. The group gathered at Northolt Airport (close to the present-day offices of the Fellowship) and were carefully 'loaded' on to a special flight arranged by British European Airways. The holiday was a great success but by far the best part was getting there and coming back.

Some members have particularly vivid memories of a holiday to Garmisch Partenkirken in Austria in 1956. An advance party met up in London the night before departure and were recommended to visit a club in Soho. Unfortunately it was downstairs, and the only way that Frederic Morena could get into the building was to bump downstairs on his backside. This was not a problem to him as it was the means by which he got into and out of his flat in Nassau Street, Bloomsbury, although there are rumours of him making use of gravity when descending by sliding down the banisters!

The trip to Austria had all the usual aspects of a continental holiday, visits to places of interest, trips up mountains, and wonderful views. One day during the holiday was Mimi's birthday and the hotel baked her a very special and rather large cake to celebrate the occasion.

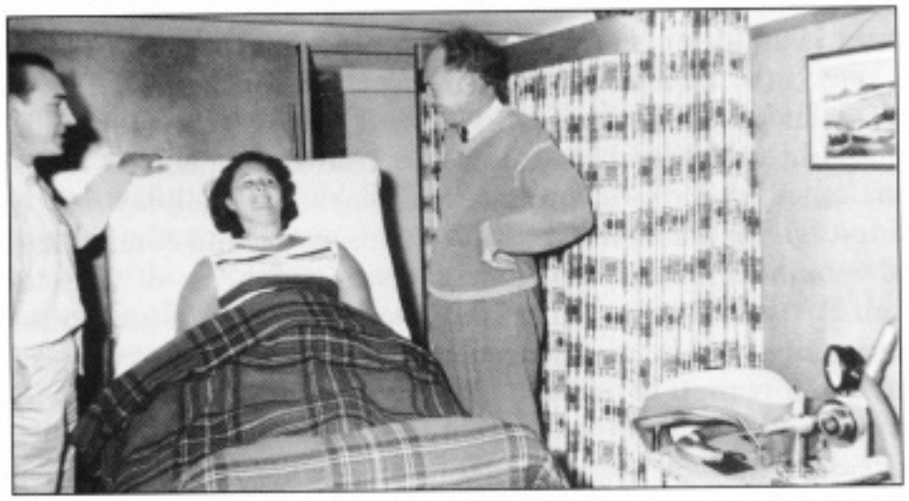
As with many trips to Europe, people liked to try the local beers and food and the Fellowship party were no exception. One member, who prefers to remain nameless, recalls visiting the Cafe Parkhutt and starting the evening with a stein of lager, followed by wine and schnapps, all helped down by Swarzbrot (black bread). Luckily he was pushing a wheelchair on the way back and that kept him upright along a dark and uneven path. After delivering his charge to her room he continued to his and managed to completely overlook the two steps down in the corridor -somehow he stayed upright (it was probably the schnapps!).

These holiday jaunts and the many stories that come from them

illustrate very well the joyful approach to life that typified Mimi Morena. In many ways she was quite the opposite of her husband; he could sometimes be quite dour in his approach, but they both had a very real determination that led to their many achievements despite the obstacles they encountered in life.

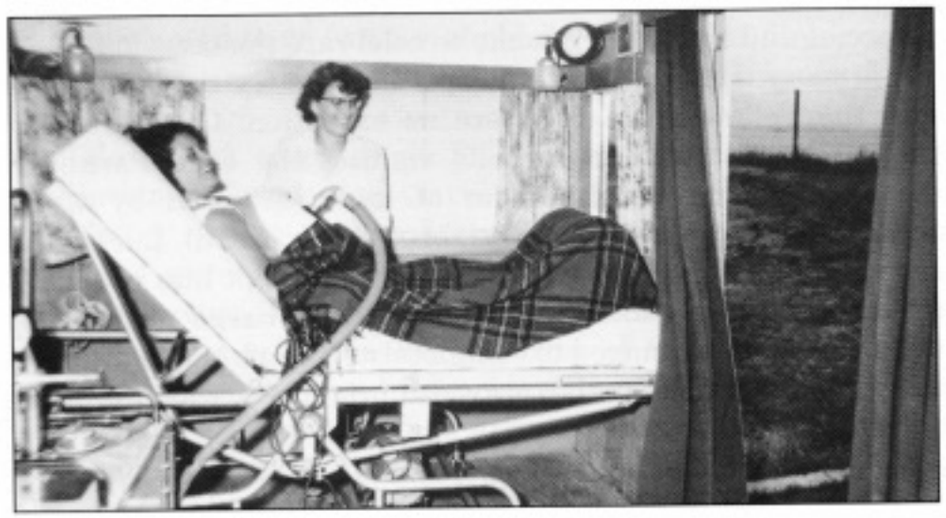
In later years there were many more continental trips; for instance, in 1958 a group went to Spain, in 1959 to Italy, and further trips to Austria and Germany took place.

Mimi Morena outlived Frederic by thirty years, dying on 7 January 1990 when nearly 100 years old.



The Fellowship's Caravans at Portsmouth.

The inspiration of Dr Brian Sandiford (standing, right, upper picture), two caravans were adapted to allow people who use respirators to have a holiday by the sea.



The Fellowship organised a number of holidays abroad over the years.

Getting people onto the plane was a challenge. The picture (left) shows one novel solution to the problem of steps.

Audrey Farnell and Judith Durrington went to Holland in 1974 and bought themselves some traditional Dutch clogs. These were enterprisingly slotted to allow their calipers to be fitted!

Mum will be furious!
A group of young ladies take to the waters at Ffrith Beach taking no heed of the damage that sea water might do to calipers.

Arriving for a holiday at the caravan owned by Leeds Branch.

Chapter 9. This sporting life

Frederic Morena had opened public swimming baths to people who had been disabled by polio back in 1952 when he spoke to the Association of Baths Superintendents at their annual meeting in Weston-super-Mare. At that time many people believed it was possible to catch polio through swimming in the same water with someone who had contracted the disease and many swimming pools were closed in areas where polio was very prevalent. Morena explained that this was not the case and outlined the considerable benefits of swimming for those with paralysed limbs.

This presentation changed attitudes nationally and many swimming pools started to positively encourage polio people to come and swim. Branches began special swimming nights and pools were often heated to a higher temperature at these times to accommodate the needs of Fellowship members.

First to the end

The development of a competitive streak amongst swimmers soon came to the fore and the first National Swimming Gala was held in 1955. Despite being organised in rather a hurry and there being no way of telling how many people were coming, it was a great success. In the following year a far more ordered scheme was devised whereby branches were to compete in seven area competitions and, from these, select a team to attend the national event.

Here too, the Fellowship started to break new ground by making the first attempts to classify people with disabilities into sporting groups according to the severity of their condition. They even had a special class, the invention of Michael Nesbit, called 'the mostest with the leastest', for very severely paralysed swimmers.

Some people were entirely nonplussed by the six-page rule book and the need to submit four sets of times in advance of the Gala in order that they may be put into the correct race; but the system worked, and set an important precedent.

The third National Swimming Gala was held at Armley Baths in Leeds in September 1957. Such was the level of excitement at the fourth

Gala in September 1958 that, some ten minutes before the start, a lady spectator accidentally fell into the pool!

Shooting arrows

Another sport that is popular amongst people with disabilities is archery; and many Fellowship members took up the sport and branches opened archery sections. One such was the Dundee and Angus branch which, in 1960, was presented with a full set of archery equipment anda hut in which to store it. The hut was erected in a quiet corner of Camperdown Park and a popular activity was undertaken by many.

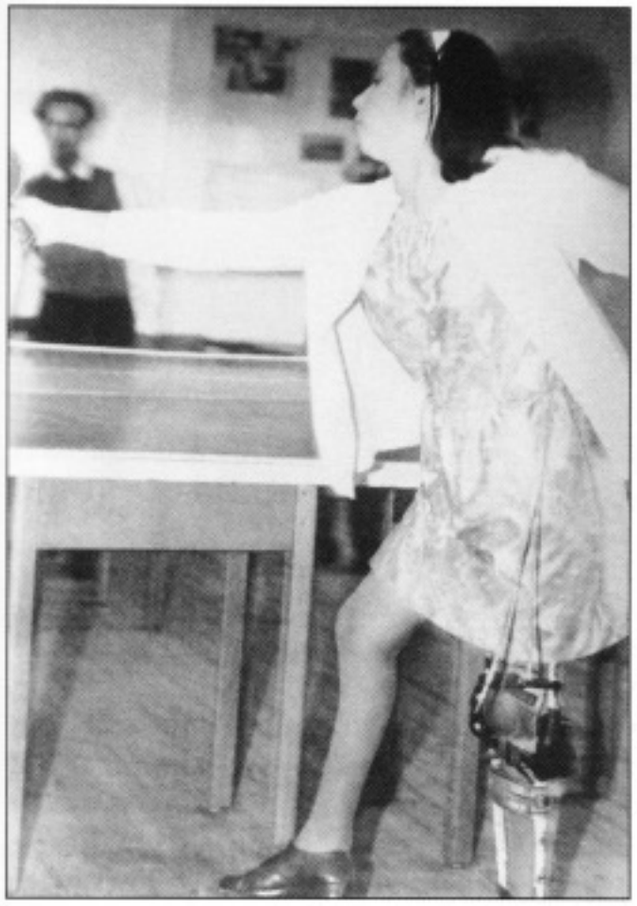
Archery allowed some members to demonstrate the way in which they had coped with their disability. Such a toxiphilist is Janet Haley who is severely paralysed in both arms and shoots with her feet.

National events

In the 1960s disability sport began to emerge as a result of the upsurge of interest in the Fellowship and other organisations such as those catering for people with spinal injuries. As a result of the pioneering work of Sir Ludwig Guttmann, sports facilities were provided at Stoke Mandeville Hospital, and the Multi-disabled Games were inaugurated. The Fellowship started to take sport more seriously and began to run its own national sports events. From these members, were sent to the national games at Stoke and thence to international competition.

The first National Sports Day was held on 17 August 1968 at Perry Barr in Birmingham, a day that had a great deal of rain!

In 1973 the National Sports Day and the Swimming Gala were held over the same weekend at the same venue - Stoke Mandeville Sports Stadium. Competitors were given points on the placings they achieved in the various events and the top man and woman in the overall competition were named Polio Sportsman and Sportswoman of the Year, the first two being David Foden and Madeleine Henry.

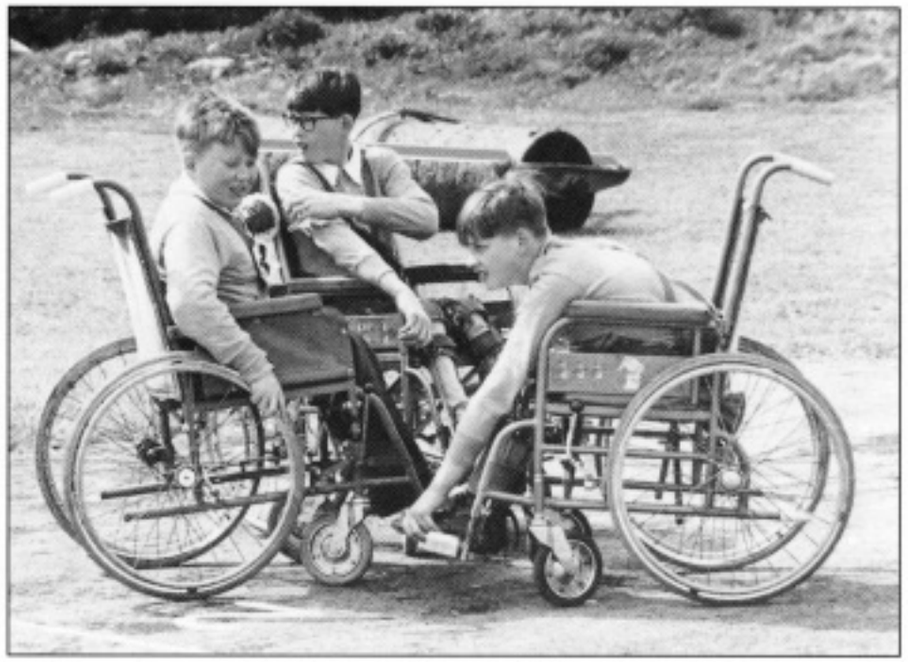


Another ever-popular sport is table tennis (left).

Below: P. Noble and M. Burns of the North-East Region 'pass the baton' in the wheelchair relay in the National Games of 1983.

Taking part in sports events organised by the Fellowship brought opportunities for travel.
The top picture shows the Northern Ireland swimming team arriving at Heysham for a national event.

The lower picture illustrates the enterprise of the girls from the Scottish Region swimming team who came to London in 1969 and found themselves some Guardsmen!

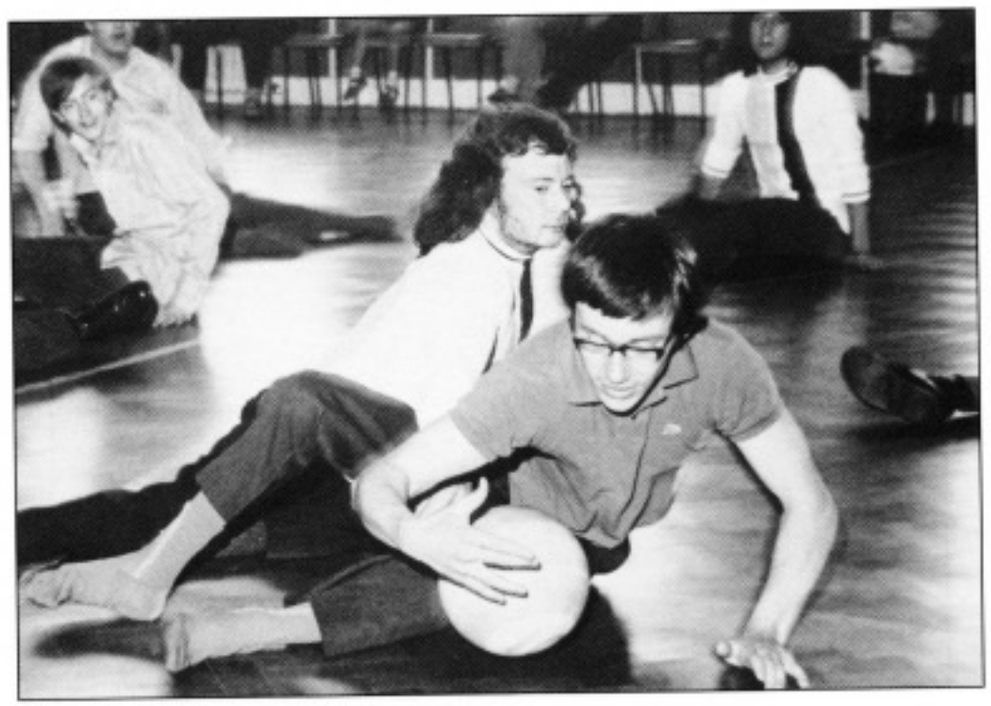


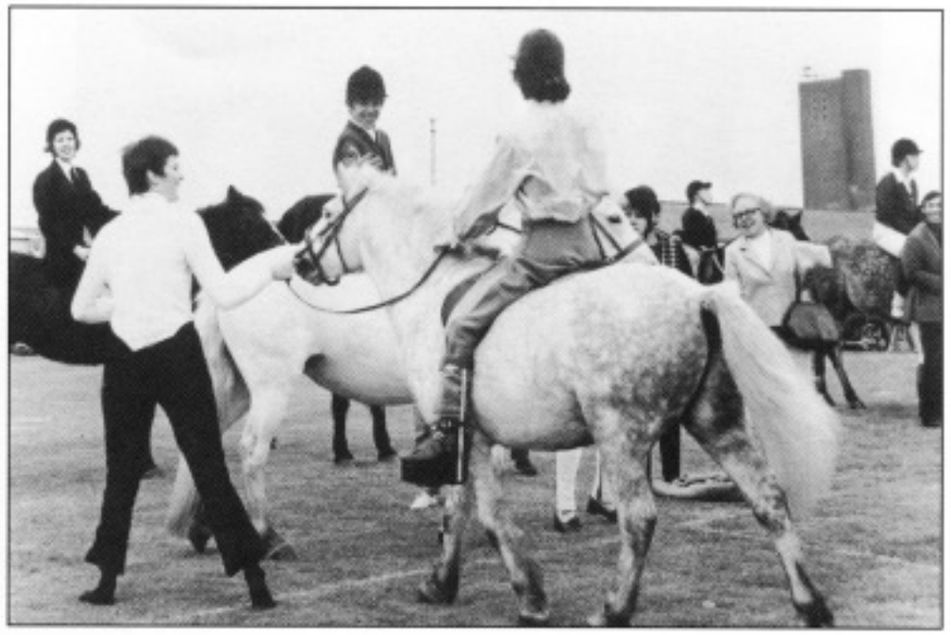
Team sports for young people are important too. The picture above shows a group planning their tactics in a competition at Stoke Mandeville Sports Stadium.

The loneliness of the long-distance pusher!
N. Bailey of Leeds doing his utmost at a Yorkshire Region sports day in 1971.

Above: The Water Polo team of the Wolverhampton, Dudley, and District Branch in 1965.

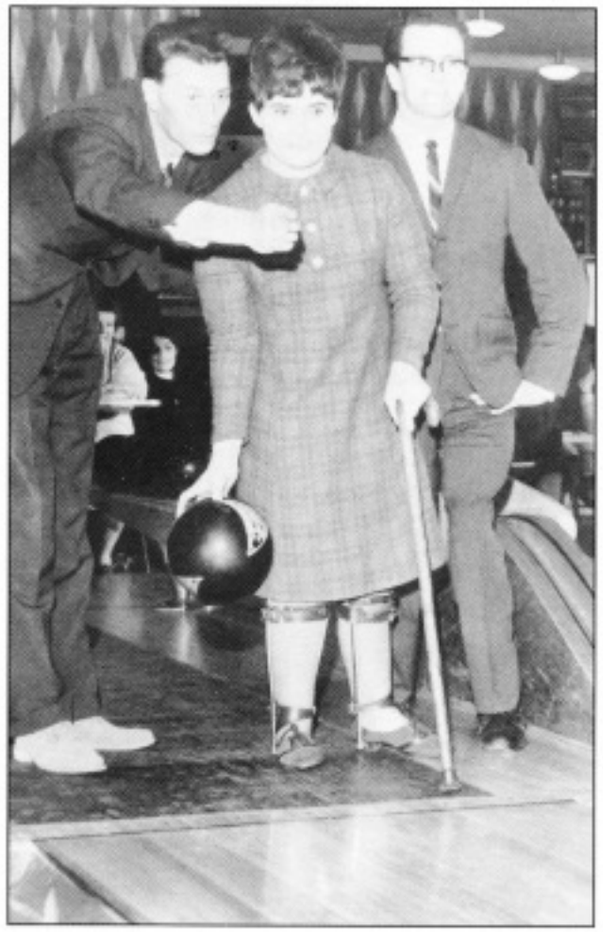
Below: A 'friendly' floor football match in 1973.





Riding is also a popular sport amongst Fellowship members. The picture above shows Alex Crawford (in the foreground) riding in competition at Stoke Mandeville Sports Stadium in October 1969.

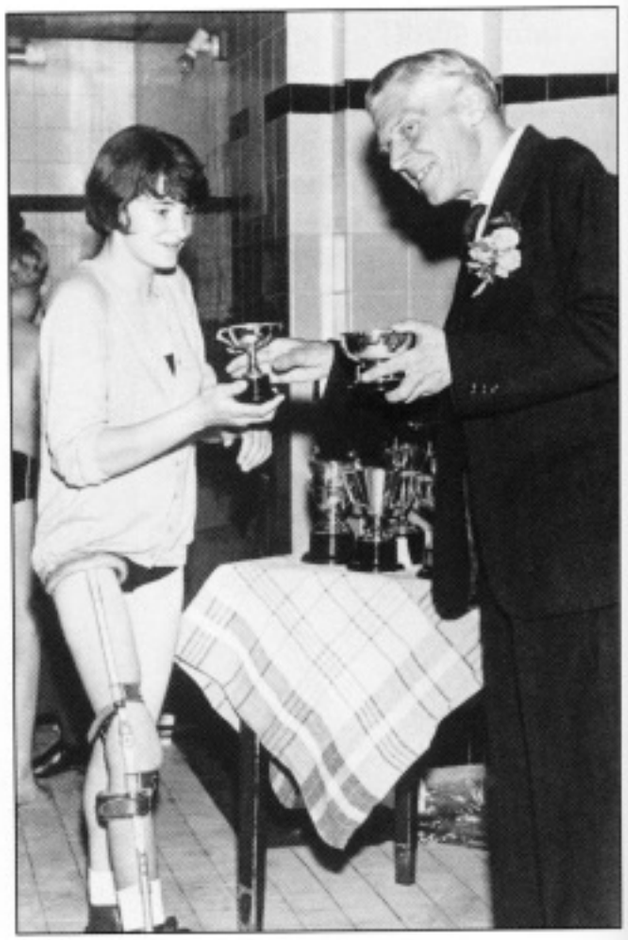
Branches would also take advantage of local sports facilities, the picture on the right shows an outing to a local bowling alley.

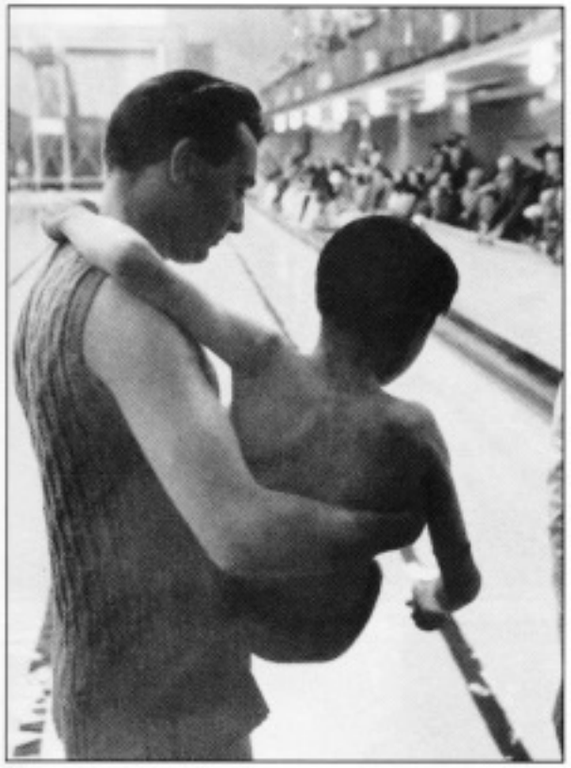


One of the best aspects of taking part is winning!

In the top picture members of the Scottish Region swimming team proudly show off the trophy that they won at a National Swimming Gala.

In the picture on the right D. Thompson is presented with the Edinburgh Cup at the National Swimming Gala in 1966.

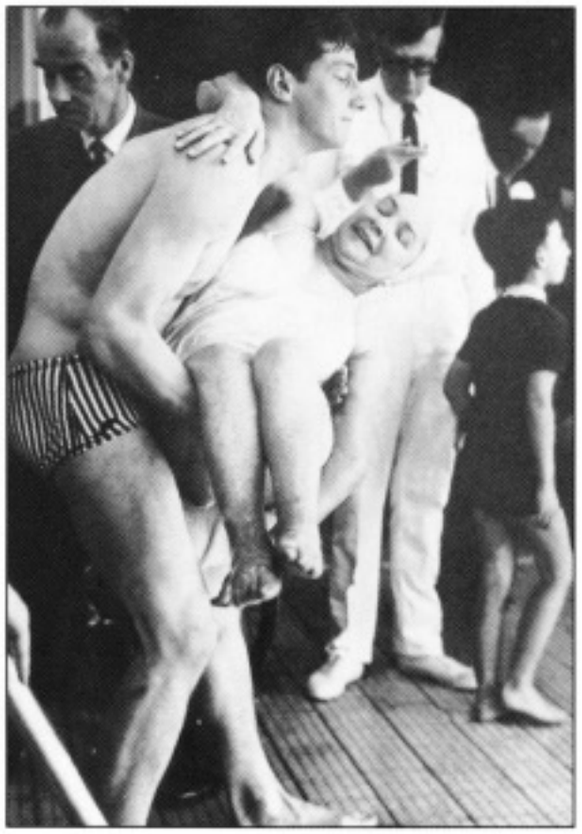


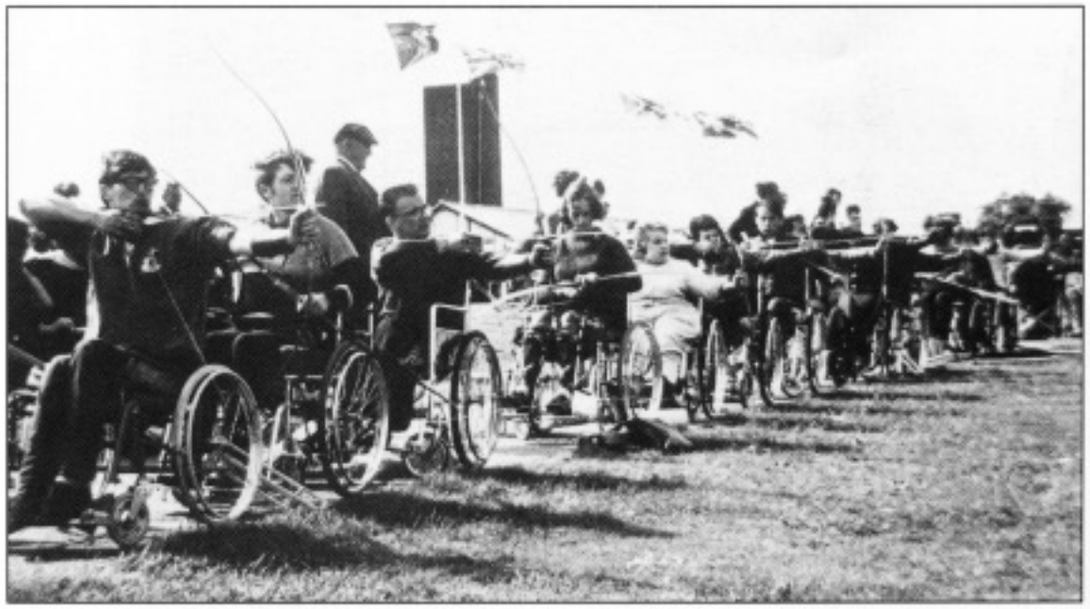


Many swimming events depended heavily on able-bodied volunteers.

In the upper picture a young swimmer is assisted at a national event.

The lower picture shows Peggy Towns getting a lift from a volunteer from RAF Halton at the National Swimming Gala in 1972

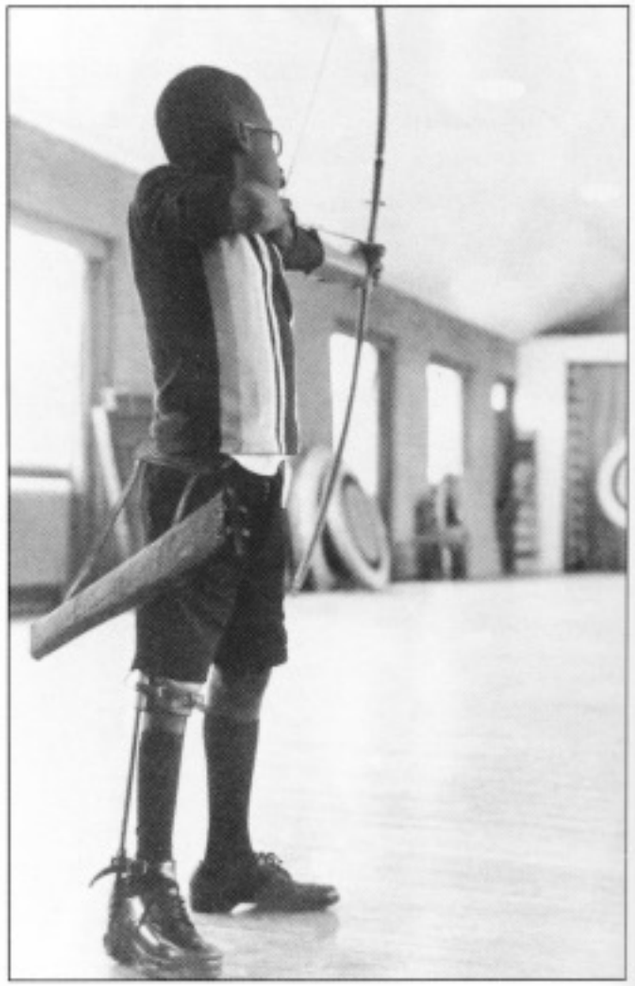




Archery has always been a popular sport amongst Fellowship members and competitions were organised at regional and national levels.

The top picture shows the line-up at a national event at Stoke Mandeville Sports Stadium, Buckinghamshire.

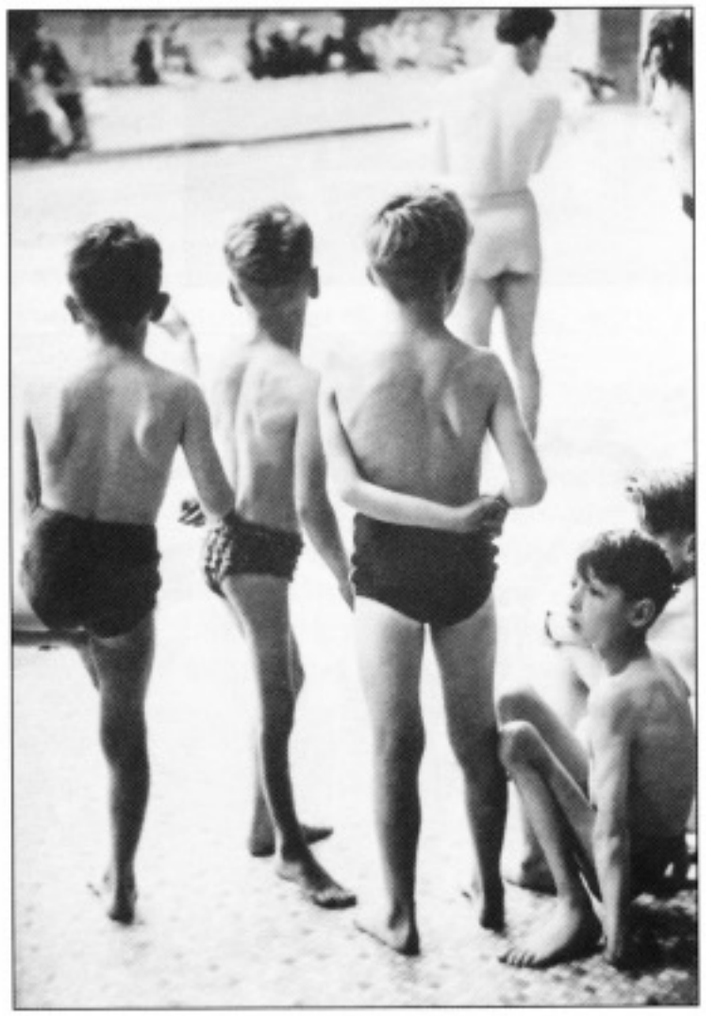
The picture on the right shows Tony Lindsey of Birmingham shooting in an indoor contest



Another popular sport over the years has been swimming; many branches had swimming sections.

The picture above shows a local children's swimming group in training.

The picture on the right is of a group of young competitors in the National Swimming Gala at Seymour Hall baths in London on 4 June 1955.



The Fellowship was instrumental in the development of sport for people with disabilities in Britain.

These pictures show competitors in wheelchair races.

Chapter 10. More Polio Personalities

A Scottish Farmer

Robert Strachan took over the 243-acre Wynton Farm at Strathmartine by Dundee in 1967 and immediately started on a comprehensive improvement plan. Robert 'took polio' (as they say in Scotland) at the age of 7 and joined the Dundee branch of the Fellowship. Through the branch he met with Vi (who contracted came when she was 8) and they married. Along with their two daughters Fiona and Lorna they made a great success of Wynton Farm, having up to sixty dairy cows of which their greatest pride was Stechan's White Lena 20th; which was Champion of the Show at Perth in 1967. The farm buildings at Wynton were especially designed for Robert's wheelchair and heralded a great improvement on the broad flat board over which he would wheel himself between the cows when first working on his father's farm at the age of 16.

Robert's other great interest was racing pigeons and his team won many awards. He was always determined that farming would be his way of life; despite 'everyone' assuming that a young man with a disability would automatically take an office job in a town.

A ballet teacher

As a teenager, Elizabeth Twistington-Higgins was totally absorbed by ballet dancing - and why not; she was good at it and showed great promise. As Elizabeth Scott, she danced in London's West End in productions of *Song of Norway* and *King's Rhapsody*. At the age of 16 she contracted polio which left her totally paralysed and in permanent need of a respirator. Inevitably the onset of such a level of disability in a young girl caused considerable depression and anxiety but Elizabeth fought back, first by developing the ability to paint to a high standard holding the brush in her mouth.

She then formed a partnership with her sister Brighid and began teaching ballet again, Elizabeth doing the teaching whilst Brighid demonstrated the movements that she described as being "too subtle to put into words". Elizabeth always regarded herself as being most fortunate that, at every turn in her life, "the right person turned up to

help me at precisely the right moment". She was able to live fairly independently in her own flat, have a car, and even find time to write her autobiography *Still Life*.

Respiratory demonstrator

The instigator of perhaps the most unusual political demonstration of the 1960s was a member of the Fellowship. On 24 September 1969 Isabel Huie led twenty-nine respirator-dependent people into Downing Street in an attempt to persuade the government to change its policy about providing an income for people with severe disabilities.

Isabel herself was dependent on a respirator and was able to move only one finger on her right hand, but this did not stop her becoming a prominent member of the Disablement Income Group (DIG) and using the same methods of polital persuasion as do able-bodied groups. Isabel's flair for organisation was not daunted by the seeming impossibility of motivating people who needed constant supplies of electricity, were using equipment which was very bulky and heavy, and who were often seen vulnerable, to make their protests.

The work of DIG was successful over the years and led to the introduction of the Attendance Allowance for disabled people with special needs.

A long-time layabout

John Prestwich was born in Oldham, Lancashire and, at the age of 7, moved to the south coast of England. Here he developed a love of the sea and, on leaving school at 16, joined the Merchant Navy. A year later in 1955 as he was realising his dream to see the world, John's ship was docked at Corpus Christi, in Texas, USA. He lay on his bunk face down feeling decidely unwell; soon he found that he could not lift his head from the pillow. Everyone else on the ship was busy and his cries for help went unheeded. With great effort John managed to turn over on to his back; this was the last time he was able to move.

Soon afterwards someone came into his cabin and discovered his distress; he was stretchered off the ship and rushed into hospital and immediately put into an iron lung, a device on which he was to depend for the next seven years.

It was the following year before John was deemed well enough to return to Britain; his mother had been with him in the States, and the family were now living in London, and so he was taken to the Royal Free Hospital at Hampstead.

He remained very ill for many months and had no realisation that his

total paralysis would be permanant. He only discovered this fact by accident when a physiotherapist was giving him some exercises and he asked which part of his body was likely to be the first to regain movement. The look on her face said it all and John began to realise that life was going to be very different from then on.

His physical health slowly improved and he was able to leave the iron lung for short periods using a cuirass respirator on his chest or a positive-pressure tube in his mouth. He even went out using a portable respirator pumped by a long-suffering attendant. Visits to the cinema became quite regular but could be fraught with problems, especially if the nurse became so engrossed in the film that she forgot to pump!

John's exploits then became more and more challenging. He managed a trip to the top of the Eiffel Tower in Paris - using a battery-operated respirator that a company had made to his own specification. He wanted a car but had to travel lying full length. The obvious answer was a vehicle that was designed for people who lie down, and so he advertised for a second-hand hearse! Sadly, the hospital authorities would not permit such a vehicle to be permanently parked in the grounds (maybe a it would give the wrong impression!) and the plan lapsed.

The small hospital ward developed into a home from home for John and was enhanced by the presence of a delightful occupational therapist named Maggie. After a while it became necessary for John to move from the Royal Free but even this cloud had a silver lining, for he discovered that he could use a cuirass respirator all the time and so left behind the iron lung. His relationship with Maggie turned from the professional to the decidedly unprofessional and they married in the early 1970s. They live in Hertfordshire where John receives much assistance from modern technology, Maggie's patience, and a lot of ingenuity. John was awarded the MBE in 1994 and found Buckingham Palace to be very inaccessible but, once again his ingenuity and determination prevailed.

Some polio personalities.

Left: Mr and Mrs Charlie Bradford and their young son.

Below: Paddy Gibbs and Anne Gibbs (no relation) at Gupshill Manor. For many years stalwarts of the Wolverhampton Branch, they opened the first Children's Section and devised a local work scheme for members. Anne became the longest-serving Branch secretary in the Fellowship's history and was awarded the M.B.E. in 1997.

Chapter 11. The welfare of the members

Virtually everyone who had polio was quickly hospitalised, some in isolation hospitals, others in specialist polio wards of local hospitals. Some did manage to avoid hospital completely as the onset of the disease did not bring on any severe illness despite resulting in paralysis. One rather unusual instance was that of Langford Banyard who contracted polio at the age of nine months, was briefly hospitalised and returned home. Like many, he needed surgery on his legs during childhood but did not go into hospital for the operations; instead they were carried out in his own home. Langford became one of the longest-serving contributors to the Fellowship's *Bulletin*, acting as its book reviewer for over twenty -three years. He died in 1985.

In the middle years of the twentieth century polio often reached epidemic proportions, but no one had any definite treatment for the symptoms of the disease; differing theories abounded. Some advocated movement, others stillness. Patients would be placed in plaster casts for many months, even years, and many children spent their formative years in hospital receiving only a rudimentary education.

Parental visiting was often discouraged for fear that it would upset the children; some establishments prohibited any visiting at all during certain months of the year or allowed parents only to stand at windows and watch their child, contact being banned entirely.

A need for determination!

The fortitude of some of the young people was quite astonishing, many underwent the ordeal of being bedridden for a long time with great cheerfulness.

One hospital, which will not be mentioned by name, did not appear to be a haven of care to one young lady (again, no names). For a 7 year-old Ward 7 was not a nice place; many children had colds and coughs, and all had sores on their eyes which a nurse would burst with a needle. The only heating was a large black coal stove which would give warmth to those close by, but if you were at the 'wrong' end of the ward you stayed cold.

One day when the ward doors were open to let in the fresh air, a fox

came wandering through. It was a good thing that Sister did not see it for she would struck it dead with just one of her steely looks! Fortunately, our informant lived to tell the tale and made a good recovery from polio - so the 'treatment' must have done some good!

A much more positive view of hospitalisation comes from Mark Thurfield who was admitted to Wingfield Nuffield Hospital in Oxford in 1944. Then 15 years of age, he had come down with polio at school and was immediately placed under the care of a physiotherapist, Miss Anger, who had worked with Sister Kenny in Australia. A 'Burco' boiler was brought into Mark's room and every four hours a quartet of nurses would surround his body from toe to chest with steaming hot towels. Miss Anger exhorted him, willing him on; he still remembers the look of joy and triumph on her craggy face when his right toe twitched. "You are going to be all right", she said and so it proved to be the case. First came movement in Mark's right foot, then his right leg, the left leg, back, and stomach muscles followed after weeks of exercises and twice-daily journeys to the hydrotherapy pool.

One day, four nurses pushed Mark in a spinal carriage to the top of Shotover Hill, laughing and joking all the way, the fresh air and the joy of being out of the ward doing the young lad so much good. All this care and concern paid off and, after just four months, Mark was able to leave hospital walking with the aid of only one stick.

The children had very varied experiences whilst in hospital but thought must be given to the parents too. Often they were separated from their ill or disabled children for long periods at a time.

One hospital had a standard letter in 1944 which it would send to parents when a child was admitted (there was no thought of Mum and Dad accompanying the child). The letter simply stated that the child had arrived and says that information on 'the Child's' progress could be obtained by sending a stamped, addressed envelope to the Sister-in-Charge. Parents were not allowed to telephone but could visit on the first Sunday in the month between 2.00 and 2.30p.m. but no visiting was allowed during January, February or March. Brothers and sisters were not allowed, nor could the parents bring sweets or food for the children, although Sister would look after 'such articles' and would 'exercise her discretion as to whether they are permissible'.

Ouch!

A constant scourge of those with paralysed limbs that have poor circulation are chilblains, the uncomfortable result of enforced lack of movement and inclement weather. Over the years *The Bulletin* carried

a large number of articles giving hints and tips on how to deal with this discomforting phenomenon. Fur-lined boots were the most common answer to the problem but these nearly always came with crepe rubber soles - O.K. for wheelchair users but no use at all for those requiring their shoes to be fitted with caliper slots. Miss B. Dunn discovered that 'Bective' fur-lined boots could be obtained with leather soles, thus solving the problem.

Audrey Mackinson had a home-made remedy for her son's chilblains which consisted of making an insulated sock from red flannel (obtained from Boots Cash Chemists) and quilting it with a filling of Thermogene. "Whilst not beautiful, when on a boy's leg under thick woollen socks it is unnoticeable and very effective."

Somewhere to live

At quite an early stage members of the Fellowship began to realise that to be true to its aims, the organisation had to adopt a caring role for polio people throughout the whole of their life. This meant more than just children's parties and employment project and went into the provision of residential accommodation for those who for whatever reason were not able to live independently.

The Walton and District branch took this challenge very seriously and, during the early 1950s, W. Andrews, the President of Walton Rotary Club and himself disabled by polio, started a project to open a residential home for people disabled by polio. In 1956 they acquired a house known as Silverwood in Byfleet Road, Cobham, Surrey and, in July 1958 the well-known actress and singer Julie Andrews opened it as a residence for twenty-four disabled people. Standing in two-and-a-half acres of wooded gardens the small Victorian villa provided homely conditions and encouraged residents to go out to work if at all possible. Those who could not find a job created some income for themselves by taking in home work, especially from the Fellowship's Christmas card scheme. The Residents' Committee was responsible for the day-to-day running of the home.

The hostel was to remain open for fourteen years, some residents staying all that time.

Another, smaller residential scheme was the six-bed hostel operated by the Watford branch at Cassio Road in the town.

Bringing them home

Although the incidence of polio in Britain was greatly reduced during the 1960s there were still some people who were exposed to the virus whilst living abroad. In such circumstances the situation was dire, for

not everywhere had the Health Service of Great Britain. After the acute stage of the disease people needed urgent repatriation but were often bedridden or using an iron lung. The only way was an RAF plane which was prohibitively expensive.

In a number of instances the Fellowship paid the cost of transport for seriously ill polio patients and took up many more cases, eventually persuading the government to adopt a policy of assistance in such instances.

Finding more room

As the need for residential accommodation for older polio people became more apparent, the Fellowship began to look to its own resources for solutions. In 1966 the council decided to reserve eight rooms at the Worthing *Lantern* for long-stay residents. This policy gradually led to the adaptation of the building into a dual-purpose residential home and holiday hotel with extensions being added in later years.

Creating an income

Helping polio-disabled people to achieve independence, often through the provision of employment and suitable aids and adaptations has always been high on the Fellowship's agenda. Some people who have had polio cannot work however as their disabilities are too severe. A particular group within the Fellowship were those who were dependent on respirators. Through the actions of the Portsmouth and Southsea branch and Dr Brian Sandiford it had been proven that iron lung users could live outside hospital, but how could they do this without an income - which they were unable to earn through employment? The government of the day had no provisions for such people and so members of the Fellowship, along with other disabled people, banded together to form the Disablement Income Group (DIG).

A prominent member of DIG was Joy Robertson who became dependent on a respirator as the result of polio in 1958. She and her husband Victor worked determinedly to create the circumstances by which she could return home, but this meant adaptations to the house and the employment of a full-time nursing assistant. Joy, along with other members of DIG, mounted a long-running campaign to persuade the government to recognise the needs of the most severely disabled people in the country even to the extent of marching on 10 Downing Street to make a protest. This demonstration was no ordinary march: the protesters came in wheelchairs with battery-operated pumps attached and even, for Diana Staples, on a low-loader lorry carrying her

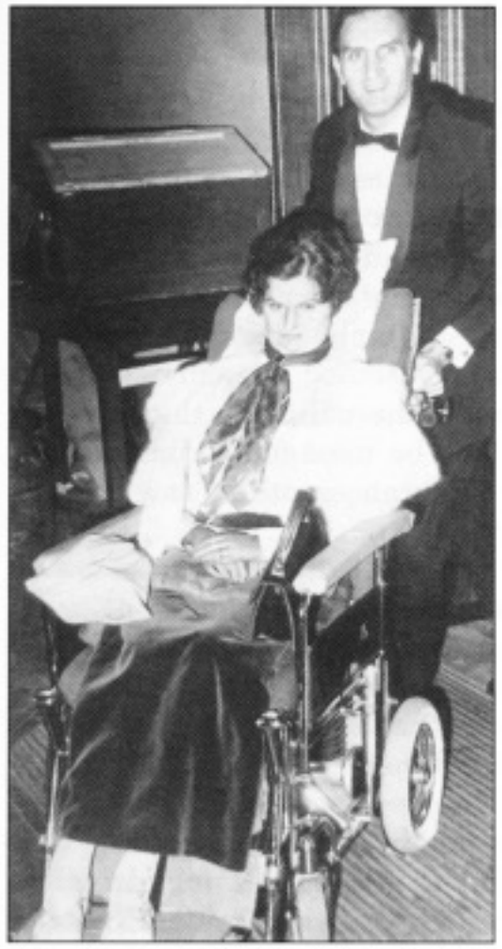
iron lung complete with nursing staff and generator.

The campaign was eventually successful and led to the provision of an Attendance Allowance and other important benefits for people with disabilities. Joy Robertson died in 1973 after spending fifteen years as a responaut running her house, being a wife, mother and creditable painter in oils - holding the brush in her mouth.

Helping the hospital

The Fellowship has been instrumental in many attempts to improve the health of people with polio. One such opportunity came about in 1985 when it was decided to rebuild the Phipps Unit for people with respiratory difficulties which since 1968 had been housed in inadequate premises at the South West Hospital in Lambeth, London. A new facility was to be opened at St. Thomas's Hospital beside the River Thames. The new unit would cost a million pounds; the Fellowship helped to start the ball rolling by donating £100,000 in October 1985. The new unit was named after Dame Felicity Lane-Fox and provides therapy for people experiencing post-polio syndrome especially in connection with respiratory problems.

Silverwood Hostel in Cobham, Surrey
Above; the residents' art group.
Below: residents help with the gardening.



Members of the Fellowship were instrumental in the Disablement Income Group's campaign to secure an income for those who are unable to work by reason of severe disability.

Joy Robertson was a prime mover in the crusade; she is seen on the left with her husband Victor.

The picture below shows members of the Disablement Income Group taking part in a march on 10, Downing Street to press home their point.

Chapter 12. The hardware of polio

Perhaps the most obvious and noticeable sign of the presence of polio in the population is the evidence of paralysed limbs and the equipment that people need to use for daily living.

The classic item of polio equipment is the caliper - the leg-worn support that enables a paralysed limb to be used for walking. Some people regarded calipers as dreadful encumbrances; others saw them as liberating devices that enabled mobility.

Christina Dixon, when just a child, wrote the following ode:

Cuthbert the caliper is my best friend,
Except when he's weak and begins to bend.
He takes me to school and he takes me to play
And he takes me home at the end of the day.

For some people wearing calipers simply became a way of life; they went on in the morning and came off at night and became almost as unnoticeable to the wearer as spectacles are to most people. However, members of the Fellowship were always expressing concern about the seemingly rudimentary nature of caliper design and the rather haphazard way in which they were made. Stories abounded of calipers that did not fit when they were first made and which had to go back to the manufacturers time after time before they could be used. The National Health Service provided the 'instruments' but, because of high cost, was very reluctant to allow a spare to be held just in case of breakage. And calipers do break; they have to take a great deal of strain in supporting weak legs and are used day after day.

It wears out so quickly....

In the early days of the Fellowship clothing was generally made from natural fibres that did not have the resistance to wear that is found in modern fabrics. Consequently, the harsh metal and pointed buckle parts of calipers would play havoc with clothing. In the days of clothes rationing the Fellowship campaigned for its members to receive additional clothing coupons to allow for this extra wear and tear.

Members devised, and shared knowledge of, a number of ingenious devices to protect their clothes from the ravages of calipers and other equipment. A particularly difficult part is the knee joint, which comes in a number of different designs all of which seem to have parts that stick out and catch on clothes. Gadgets to enshroud the joint were invented but no one seemed to tackle the problem at its core and develop a clothes-kind knee joint for calipers.

They say that 'boys will be boys' and when George Hill, as a small boy,first obtained a jointed caliper he soon discovered that it was possible to insert a percussion cap (normally to be found in the toy guns used for playing cowboys and indians) into the joint. When he stood up he made quite a bang!

Plastics

In the early 1960s the 'cosmetic' caliper became available. This differed from the traditional design in that the lower part was made of thermoplastic which was moulded to a plaster cast of the wearer's leg. The metalwork of the upper caliper was attached to the plastic and some degree of cosmoses was achieved. The 'good-looking caliper' only improved the visual aspect to a slight extent because the knee was still held straight and most users continued to walk with a considerable limp. The great boon of the cosmetic caliper was that it did not need thick-soled shoes in which to fix the tubes for the caliper ends. This meant that unadapted, everyday shoes could be worn - a source of great liberation for many.

People with arm disabilities did not usually require any special equipment although during the early stages of recovery many children would be fitted with 'wing splints' which held the arms horizontally and bent at the elbows. Some people with paralysed arms were given various wrist and elbow braces but these were of little use.

Chariots

Those with more extensive disabilities or the inability to walk any great distance would use a wheelchair. In the immediate post war years the standard NHS-issue chair was a folding canvas-seated design with small wheels and coil springs which had to be pushed by an escort.

Jane Hickey seemed to have more than her fair share of problems with these early chairs. Once, the canvas split under the seat and whenever the chair went over a bump her bottom took the blow. On another occasion a wheel fell off the chair when she and her family were passing a pub. Henry took the chair to a local garage to get it repaired,

leaving Jane clinging for support to the railings with her baby daughter under her other arm. Imagine the comments of those leaving the pub about 'women drinking and unfit to have children'.

These early chairs were quickly replaced by wheelchairs with two large wheels with hand-grip rims which could be propelled by the user. Initially, many chairs were made with the large wheels at the front which gave excellent manoeuvrability. However, this required a far greater amount of effort by the user than a chair with large rear wheels and it was this design that became standard.

As sport for people with disabilities became more popular, so there was a call for wheelchairs that were lighter in weight. Market forces quickly came into play and people were able to purchase a wide range of ultra-lightweight and, in some instances, very specialist wheelchairs.

Breathing machines

When a person is first affected by polio the paralysis is often extensive and the breathing muscles can be affected. Some means of artificial respiration was required and, traditionally, this was provided by the tank respirator or 'iron lung'. Many polio people only required help with breathing for a short time after the initial onset of the disease. Others depended on external means for the remainder of their lives, whilst others still would be able to breathe unaided whilst awake but needed assistance when sleeping.

The provision of tank respirators and the necessary air pump was an expensive business and, shortly after the Second World War, the newly formed health service had little money for this high-cost item of equipment. Lord Nuffield stepped into the breach and, in conjunction with the Fellowship, organised a national scheme for the provision of iron lungs throughout the country through voluntary donations.

The need for respirators forged a slightly unusual alliance in the manufacturing field for many were made by the firm of Siebe Gorman of Chessington, Surrey, whose main line of business was the manufacture of deep-sea diving equipment.

The breastplate

In the late 1950s a new type of respirator came from Sweden. The cuirass or breastplate respirator consisted of a tight-fitting shell which was placed over the user's chest and connected by a flexible tube to an air pump. This device did the same work as the iron lung but in a far more lightweight and convenient manner. As the cuirass respirator was developed, portable versions became available which meant that

respirator-dependent people could move around and take trips out -and even go abroad.

Later, medical science became more adept at fitting positive-pressure respiration equipment directly to the user through the trachea and many members adopted this method of breathing.

Trikes

Mobility outside the home was always a source of concern for people with paralysed limbs. For many years the government provided three-wheeled cars for people with disabilities and many Fellowship members had these 'little blue cars'. There were a number of designs made by companies such as Tippen and AC (whose other cars were amongst the fastest sports models available). The 'trikes' were always single-seaters, a real bone of contention to the users, for one could not take one's husband, wife, child or even tiny baby in the car. Legally, that is, and many a Fellowship member would admit to breaking the law on carrying passengers in their trike.

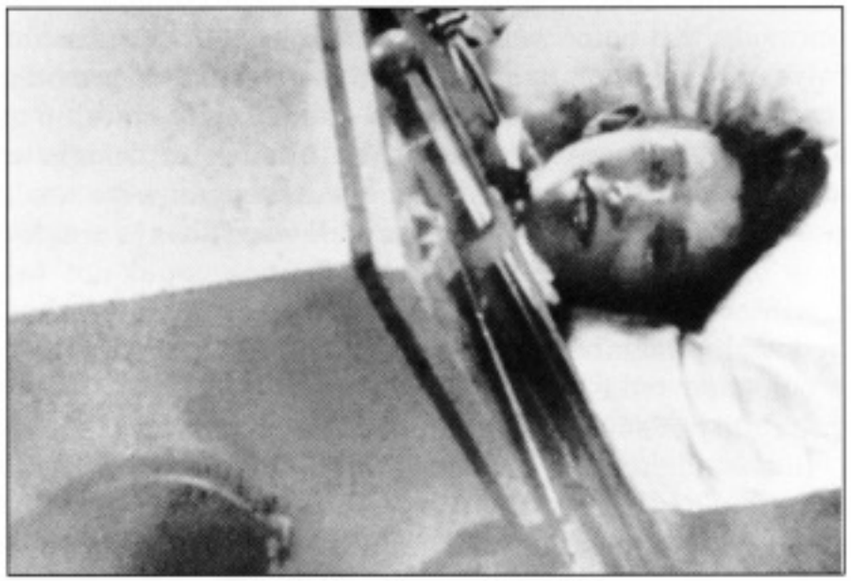
The availability of such instant and simple mobility was an important lifeline to independence and branches would organise trike trips out for the day. The Fellowship worked very closely with the Invalid Tricycle Association, giving support to its campaigns and publicity to events, a major one being an annual service at Canterbury Cathedral.

The trikes were phased out in the 1970's when the government introduced the Mobility Allowance and leasing schemes for four-wheeled cars. An anomaly that still exists from the days of the trikes is found in respect of the youngest age at which a disabled person can drive. With the trikes being officially motor-cycles this was 16 years; when the trikes were phased out young people protested that they would have to wait a further year before getting mobile and so the law was changed for people with disabilities; and today such 16 year-olds can drive a four-wheeled car.

I can

People with very extensive paralysis needed a great deal of assistance. The advent of electronics technology helped to greatly improve the level of independence of these members of the Fellowship: *Possum* is the Latin word for 'I can' and is also an acronym for Patient-Operated Selector Mechanism. Initially, these devices offered a choice of a number of operations which could be selected by a paralysed person using a very simple switch activated by the slightest touch or by breathing through a tube. For those who were bedridden or unable to move, this brought an

undreamed of level of independence. The National Health Service was able to provide the main equipment but it was very expensive and funds would not stretch to major peripherals such as a typewriter. This was another arena into which the Fellowship stepped willingly, spending considerable sums of money on providing the state-of-the-art equipment that would mean so much to the users.



The hardware of polio.

Above: An un-named 13 year-old boy in an iron lung at Neasden isolation hospital in September 1951.

Below: Visiting day at a hospital for children recovering from polio. Often parents were only allowed to visit for a short time each month.

The hardware of polio.

A polio-disabled Scout wearing calipers on both legs tends the fire at Woodlarks Camp Site for Disabled People, Farnham, Surrey, in 1961

The hardware of polio.

Two young ladies with calipers pose for the camera at the Scottish Region rally at Scone Palace in 1962.

Chapter 13. The end of fear

The very word 'polio' struck great fear into the community in the first half of the twentieth century. This disease seemed to come from nowhere, strike quickly and, in many instances, have devastating results - regularly causing death. The emerging medical sciences seemed to have no idea about how to cure or control it and the epidemics which occurred during the summer months appeared to be getting larger, affecting more people.

A connection with water had been identified and many people thought that polio could be caught through communal bathing. Consequently, when an epidemic appeared swimming pools would be closed and children warned not to go near rivers or lakes. Some people thought that those who had caught polio were infectious even many years after the onset of the disease and so people who were disabled by polio were often shunned. Certainly in Britain, polio people were often banned from swimming pools until Frederic Moreno made his impassioned plea to the Association of Baths Superintendents in the early 1950s.

Most of the ideas people had about the transmission of polio were based on gossip and old wives' tales, although the scientists had a very shrewd idea of the make-up of polio. Research had shown that this was a virus which was present in the general environment and that it became stronger during warm weather and in places with still water and swampy ground. In the 1930s and 1940s vaccines had been developed for other viruses, especially influenza, and smallpox and researchers knew that polio was no different.

The principle of vaccination against a virus is to introduce a small quantity of the virus into the body. The dose is not large enough to cause the disease but does trigger the body's immune system to produce antibodies - chemicals that will resist and kill the virus. Once these antibodies are present they remain in the body so that, when a full-strength version of the disease comes along, the body has the wherewithal to fight it.

The research gets underway

In 1947 Jonas Salk became head of the Virus Research Laboratory at the University of Pittsburgh and began to investigate the polio virus. Initially, he had to sort out the different strains - there are a hundred and twenty-five of them! His work showed that these could be divided into three basic types and that a vaccine would have to be effective against all three. That was the 'simple' task, next he had to work on devising a system that gives the body the ability to fight back against the three types. The problem in all this was obtaining enough of the polio virus itself; you could not just go out and scoop it up. In 1948 researchers at Harvard University made a breakthrough in the production of the virus. They found that they could grow it on scraps of tissue rather than on a living organism as had been the practice in previous years. Using penicillin to sterilise the tissue they were able to create large quantities of polio virus for research purposes.

The discovery of a method of growing large quantities of virus enabled Jonas Salk to speed up his research. He experimented with formaldehyde to kill the virus but leave its molecular structure sufficiently intact so that it would trigger the production of antibodies in human tissue. In 1952 he tried the vaccine on a group of children who had contracted polio but made a full recovery; after the vaccination their level of antibodies increased - this was the result that Salk wanted! Then he tried the new vaccine on people who had not had polio, these included himself, his wife, and his children - a brave move. The volunteers all produced the antibodies and none contracted polio.

Salk's discovery was made public and trials began in 1954. The results saw a 60 to 70 per cent reduction in the incidence of polio and Salk was hailed a hero. A big hitch came early in the tests when two hundred people contracted the disease as a result of the vaccine and eleven of them died. Immediate investigations were made and it was discovered that all the victims had received serum from one batch which had been poorly made. New productions standards were put in place and the trials resumed. Deemed successful in 1955, the vaccine was made available to the general public in the United States and exported to many countries including Britain.

Campaigning in Britain

The Fellowship welcomed the arrival of the vaccine and immediately set up a campaign to encourage everyone in the country to become protected. As polio tended to affect children more than adults it was young people who initially received the vaccine. Of course, there were

sceptics; some people were very worried about the thought of having their child injected with the polio germ and refused. There were scare stories, especially arising from the batch of poor vaccine in the United States, but most parents saw the value of the vaccine and great queues formed at vaccination stations and clinics.

An important new development in vaccination came in 1957 with the work of Albert Sabin who doubted that Salk's vaccine, which relied on dead virus, was strong enough. He developed a new vaccine which synthesised the action of the real polio virus and this meant using live virus. His breakthrough was to develop a vaccine which would reproduce in the stomach rather than in the nervous system; this vaccine also had the advantage that it could be swallowed rather than injected. Since 1962 the Sabin vaccine has been the more commonly used, as it is cheaper to produce and far more comfortable to administer.

Get the jab!

As an example of the way in which vaccination spread in Britain, in October 1958 the Medical Officer of Health in Portsmouth wrote to all parents encouraging them to have their children vaccinated against polio. At that time only 30 per cent of children in the city had been protected and the government had decided to make the vaccine available to people aged from six months to 25 years. It was necessary to register and then to wait for vaccine to become available but, by the end of the 1950s, Salk serum was being imported in large quantities from the United States and Canada.

There is no doubt that the work of Jonas Salk, Albert Sabin and their fellow researchers in the United States brought an end to a great scourge. By the 1960s the population of many developed countries began to be almost fully immune to the polio virus. This breakthrough brought a slight change in the direction of the Fellowship; by the end of the 1960s there were few new cases of polio. The steady flow of disabled children and adults who had been coming into membership since the Fellowship began started to dry up. This was, of course, good news - no organisation for people with disabilities would want a disabling disease to continue just so that the organisation could do 'good works'. Now, though, the emphasis was to change slightly; the Fellowship would be concentrating on helping the polio survivors of Britain to live fulfilled lives despite their disabilities.

Research was to continue, not now into finding a cure for polio but into ways of helping people to live with their disabilities, to find better medical procedures to help strengthen weak limbs, and to develop improved

appliances and equipment.

The old enemy might be no more but there were still many battles to be fought.

Since the development of the polio vaccine the Fellowship has maintained its fight to encourage everyone to become vaccinated. The effort has not just been confined to the United Kingdom, for polio was still rampant in places like India and Africa. Over the years the Fellowship supported initiatives by many organisations who sought to achieve the objective of a polio-immune world population. The aim was to do this by the year 2000; it may not be fully achieved by that date but the fight goes on, and one day new cases of polio will be a thing of the past.

Chapter 14. The Late Effects of Polio

You got your polio, you made a recovery, you might be left with a paralysed leg or something like it, and then you got on with life. That has been the reality for people who contracted polio over the years. The disease came, you were often very ill, then it went away and that was that. But, some forty years after the onset of polio many people began to find that their health was deteriorating; they were often very tired, there was breathlessness, muscle pain - all manner of symptoms that did not make sense.

People would go to their doctor and be met with a blank look, there was no explanation. Perhaps it was old age (but some of the patients were only in their forties). Perhaps it was a virus - but nothing showed on tests. No one seemed to have an answer until a link was noticed: everyone who presented with these new symptoms had been a polio patients at some time in their life. Some people has made a complete recovery from polio, others had some level of disability - could it be connected with polio?

Is it really a problem?

At first the medical profession was very sceptical about this notion - how could a viral disease make a resurgence after forty or more years? In Fellowship branches people began to talk about these new symptoms and it became obvious that there was a link with polio. Those who had 'recovered' and felt they had no need of the Fellowship heard the rumour

and phoned the Fellowship. They were greeted with understanding and support and the assurance that they were not going mad. And so it was that slowly there dawned an understanding that here was a situation in which some polio people were affected again by the disease even after many years.

The symptoms of the late effects of polio (LEP), sometimes called Post-Polio Syndrome (PPS), are very varied but often include those previously mentioned. Because the condition is so non-specific the medical profession is still struggling to understand it and it has become necessary for the Fellowship to take a lead to support sufferers. Even the Fellowship had trouble with the condition at first and at one time *The Bulletin* carried an article denouncing the late effects. However, soon after, the flood of members' comments led to a change in the Fellowship's stance and the campaign to have LEP recognised as a valid medical condition was well underway.

The Fellowship has worked with sister organisations all over the world and assisted members to attend an international conference on LEP in 1997, it has produced information for professionals, and has pressed for training on LEP to be included in training curricula.

Continuing support

Many LEP patients apply for Disability Living Allowance and were having great difficulty in getting the help due to them. The Fellowship took up their cause and the condition now has a major entry in the reference book used by the DLA advisory board. Funds have been provided for research into LEP and a new campaign, Outreach 2000, aimed at reaching every polio survivor in Britain has been inaugurated. Reaching out by writing articles in the popular press, making television and radio broadcasts, and using every available medium to publicise the cause, Outreach 2000 especially aims to help those who have LEP but have forgotten about the polio that they suffered as a young child. Such people are unlikely to connect two very separate medical events in their lives but by recognising that they have LEP instead of a series of unexplained symptoms, they can be helped to a better lifestyle and the ability to cope with their health.

In 1998 the Fellowship produced a videotape which helped to explain ways of living with LEP for, at that time, current opinion was that there is no cure for the condition but that changing one's way of living could greatly help to alleviate the effects.

Chapter 15. Into the new millennium

In 1960, shortly before his death, Frederic Moreno looked back over the first twenty-one years of the Fellowship's life. When he first met with Patricia Carey and she shared her ideas he was sceptical but he soon saw the value of such an organisation, the likes of which was not known in Britain. Now the Fellowship was coming of age, the scourge of polio was being laid because the vaccine had been discovered and the incidence of the disease was dropping rapidly.

The old man reflected proudly on the achievements; the Infantile Paralysis Fellowship was the first major organisation in this country to be was run by people with disabilities caring for others with disabilities; it had helped polio people to become accepted by society and shown that they could be worthwhile workers, new self-respect had been generated amongst people who, formerly, would have been hidden away in back rooms or hospital wards. Many polio people had made good marriages, held down valuable jobs, had children, even grandchildren. A welfare service that concentrated on rehabilitation rather than 'hand-outs' was setting the pattern for the future of social provision throughout the whole country.

The Fellowship operated hotels that were accessible and welcoming to people with disabilities, there were over ninety branches, some with their own headquarters and hostel accommodation. Swimming had been opened up to a whole range of people with disabilities - not just polio, and the charity Christmas card had been established as a major source of voluntary organisation funding. Of paramount importance was the role of people with disabilities taking on the management and voluntary work; of course they were helped by a whole army of able-bodied volunteers without whom the Fellowship would falter, but the importance was that it was people with disabilities who had taken a role in deciding their own future.

Living with polio

The Fellowship is now sixty years old; for many in the population polio is forgotten but for the members polio is a daily fact of life. The emergence of Post-Polio Syndrome has presented a new challenge, and statistics indicate that the Fellowship will need to offer support until at least 2020. In 1997 the influx of new members was as high as any year in the 1950s and this may extend the life of the Fellowship even further.

As the twentieth century draws to a close the Fellowship has set itself the tasks of getting in touch with every person in the British Isles who has had polio, of ensuring that the needs of these people are properly represented, and that all possible steps will be taken to enable all polio people to play a full part in the life of the community.

Long-term development plans are being made to ensure the continuing availability of resources and keep administration costs to a minimum, thereby allowing the bulk of donated funds to be spent directly on the welfare of members. There are continuing challenges; most notably these are being brought on by the late effects of polio and the simple fact that the Fellowship's membership is getting older. Many branches feel that they have had their heyday, some have even closed (although new branches have opened in recent years). The expectations of members are changing and diversifying, presenting new challenges to the structure and activity of the Fellowship as a whole.

'39 and '99

How does the Fellowship of today compare to that organisation first envisaged by Patricia Carey and Frederic Morena as they failed to pay attention to their German lessons back in 1938? The achievements have been massive; in sixty years this organisation has had a crucial effect on the lives of people with disabilities in Britain. Opportunities for education, employment, marriage, parenting, access to buildings, leisure activities, and in many other spheres have been created by the determination and foresight of the Fellowship's workers. No one would want the scourge of polio to revisit the population but for those whose lives have been affected by the disease, the Fellowship has been an important player which has brought many to successful and fulfilled lives.

Times have changed; no longer is polio the feared, incurable, crippling disease as it was in the early days. The Fellowship has changed, but that is nothing new. In each decade of its life new challenges came along - the children became teenagers and presented new needs, they grew to adults and wanted something different. The membership aged and called for a different kind of support, and then the late effects of polio reared their ugly head to give a new impetus.

To each of these challenges the Fellowship has found answers, for it has always been a gathering of people who have disabilities who are working together to help meet the needs of other who have disabilities. Whether one was a short-trousered ten-year-old in leg irons, a teenage lass using a wheelchair, a mum with useless arms, a disabled man looking for a job, a pensioner with new and unexplained symptoms, the Fellowship was there - and will continue to be there. Until there is no longer a need, the Fellowship will always be SOMETHING TO LEAN ON.

The British Polio Fellowship was founded to help anyone who has been affected by Polio.

The work started in 1939 and is as vital today as it was then. The Fellowship offers support, information, welfare services, and social activities through its many branches in the British Isles.

New members are always welcomed, please contact us at the address below.

The Fellowship maintains its work entirely through fundraising and voluntary donations. If you wish to support our work, please contact us.

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South Ruislip, Middlesex. HA4 6SE
Telephone: 0181-842 1898 • Fax: 0181-842 0555

'Something to lean on' has been compiled by the Rev'd Barry North who is a qualified social worker and Secretary of the East Midlands Region and Lincolnshire Branch of the Fellowship.

The British Polio Fellowship
was the first organisation
of disabled people
in the United Kingdom.
This is the story of its
first sixty years.