



Coventry



Irish

Society





Rory Ryan Chair



Dár gcairde agus ár gcomhaltaí go léir

To all our dear friends and members,



It's been a very busy period since we last met for our AGM. We have seen a hive of activity from within the Society ranging from youth outreach, Health & Wellbeing, Survivors and a new employee base.

Within the last 18 months or so we have been on a campaign to breathe more life into the Charity that we all love. I am happy to say that we are steadily succeeding in completing this campaign. With record numbers of inclusion and more memberships obtained through outreach to 2nd and 3rd generation within the Irish community of Coventry.

I am excited about what the next 18 months will bring to the society. I am immensely proud of the hard work that Simon and the team have put in over this period. The Office is now acting more like an Irish Heritage Centre and a Cultural Hub for all our events, members and heritage projects.

I also want to thank our wonderful Trustee group who give their free time to participating, leading and advocating the society. We have been fortunate to have had tremendous support from all our Associate business members that have looked after us from sponsoring to advice. My deepest thank you to you all!

My main thanks will always go to our loyal members, and groups from the Friendship Group to the Claddagh Group, these members are the heart of society and we are where we are because of their unwavering support.

We are delighted to obtain a 3-year extension to our Tenancy at Eaton House, taking us up to May 2028. We are extremely grateful to Friargate Projects and the City Council for their support and to the Charity 'Avire' that arranges the Tenancy

As always my gratitude will always go to the Emigrant Support Programme (ESP) from Ireland for their continued financial support as our primary funder. This year ESP have included an additional £6,000 for Irish Survivors Lunch Clubs which is so important for the Survivors Group. Also thanks again to the Ireland Fund of Great Britain that have offered the Charity fantastic support by funding our new Mental Health Worker Siobhan. Also greatly appreciated funding from the Big Lottery again to fund the Survivors Lunch Clubs and Outings.

We have a lot to look forward to in the coming months and this will all start with the launch of our new promotional films which can be viewed on Youtube with links to the films on our website and social media sites. Hearing the importance of the Charity's work from our service users gives us all the inspiration to drive the Charity forward. Thank you to Charlie Byfield for creating the films.

Mise le meas,

Rory Ryan - Chair

Managers Report



The Charity continues to focus its attention on supporting the vulnerable members of the Irish community. 98 people, many of whom are vulnerable have received significant support from the charity in the previous 12 months as part of our caseworker projects. In addition, our day to day enquiries, Irish Passports, Utility bills, Welfare and Health enquiries has provided a service to more than 1300 people in the last 12 months. Irish Passport and Citizenship enquiries now account for around 50% of all day to day enquiries. There is a significant increase in 3rd Generation Irish obtaining Irish Citizenship.

I'm pleased to announce the publication of our 2 new promotional films that demonstrate the vital work of the Charity from the perspective of our service users. The films are an important development for the Charity to enable the Irish community and funders to understand the importance of our work (Press release on page 9). Thank you to Charlie Byfield for great work!

Our Irish Survivors support service continues to help 60 Survivors across the Midlands. We have supported 16 of those Survivors to obtain payments from the Mother and Baby Home Payments Scheme. In addition, we have conducted a number of Lunch Clubs with an average of 45 attendees. We were delighted to take 35 of the Survivors group on holiday to County Wicklow in June 2025. This was made possible by an anonymous donation of £10,000 from an individual passionate about the group.

We were also delighted to relaunch our 'Betty Hunter Dementia Support Group' 'Betty's Friends' named in tribute to the late Betty Hunter, who was so brilliant at providing Dementia support services in Coventry. Betty's company 'Care Associates' have again been a main supporter of the Charity at our annual ball 2025, which is fantastic news!. Thank you to Gez and Helen Hunter for your support!

Also a big thank you to the Ireland Fund of Great Britain that fund our new worker Siobhan to organise the Dementia Group and our new Walking Group.

The Claddagh Group every Tuesday 12pm-2pm, and the Friendship Group every Friday 12pm-2pm continue to meet at Eaton House both groups are going strong! They are a fantastic groups with around 50 members on Tuesdays and 25 members on Fridays, new members are always welcome.

Our Lunch Clubs are still well attended and we look forward to next 3 events at Christ the King on 24th October, 21st November and the 19th December.

We continue to host Irish Language Classes with an intermediate group meeting on Thursday evenings and an online group courtesy of Dr Ian Malcolm.

Our Oral History exhibition 'Irish Heart, Coventry Home'. Is on permanent display at the Charity, and was this year featured as part of the Coventry Heritage days. We also created a second exhibition space for temporary exhibitions and were delighted to host the Peace Heroines in 2025.

Our E-Newsletter continues to build subscribers and is a facility for the whole Irish community to communicate their news and events. Please do subscribe by visiting our website.

Our 32nd Anniversary Summer Ball at Christ the King was a great success! Thank you to all our friends and stakeholders that supported the event! The event raised £4,000 which is our highest total yet.

I would like to thank our main funder the 'Emigrant Support Programme' for all their fantastic support of the charity and the Irish community in Coventry and Warwickshire. Also, to our other funders the 'Big Lottery and the 'Ireland Fund of Great Britain' and the City Council. I would like to thank our Trustees that support the charity as volunteers, our dedicated staff team and our honorary president David Cairns, who continues to support the charity (aged 92!) Mostly to thank our members, volunteers, and clients and associates for their contribution to the charity. We are grateful for the opportunity to support you and will continue to do our best to provide an exceptional service.

Simon McCarthy—CEO

LIZ FLANNELLY HEALTH OUTREACH WORKER



In November of 2024, I began my role as Coventry Irish Society's Health Outreach Worker. This follows a ten year tenure as a trustee, and years of experience running pubs such as Flannelly's and The Park Gate. Because of this, I am able to bring a variety of skills to my work with the charity, particularly when it comes to assisting with regular events like our Lunch Clubs, as well as one-off events such as our Saint Patrick's Day Lunch Club.

Working within the Irish community over the years has enabled me to form close bonds with its members; this helped the process of joining the staff team at CIS, as I was met by a lot of familiar faces. My work with the wider Irish community in Coventry was recognised recently at our Annual Ball, where I was given an award for outstanding service to the Irish community in Coventry, in particular for supporting social projects and befriending within the society.

My main responsibility is support clients with Irish Passport and Citizenship applications. This includes assisting clients to obtain all the required documentation, helping them to determine whether they are eligible for a Passport/Citizenship, and often, going through the application process with them on a one-to-one basis. I have also recently been given dispensation to witness Irish Passport applications, which will enable me to support even more clients going forward.

I am also responsible for providing free information, advice, and support to clients regarding Healthcare and Welfare supports. Since I've joined, I have helped clients with concerns about pensions, benefits, housing, and a range of other topics. In order to increase my knowledge on these issues, I have completed training courses on benefits such as Universal Credit and PIP, as well as one centred on supporting the Irish community with Dementia and Memory Loss.

I continue to engage with the local Irish community outside of work, and every Saturday I volunteer at the charity's allotment where I work alongside a team of fellow volunteers headed up by Tommy Cleary. Together, we help to grow some of the produce that is distributed amongst CIS members at the office every week.

Liz Flannelly

Health Outreach Worker

Manisha O' Malley

Survivors Outreach Worker



Dia daoibh a chairde,

I would like to start by saying ‘go raibh míle maith agaibh’ (thank you very much) to all the staff, trustees, and members who have offered me such a warm welcome and heaps of support since I first joined the charity in September 2024. Over the last twelve months, I am proud to say that I have contributed to the amazing work carried out by the Midlands Irish Survivors Service.

This summer was exceptionally busy. We visited the Irish Embassy in London, where Survivors enjoyed an Afternoon Tea with the Ambassador, who also gave us a private tour of the Embassy. We also took Survivors on a wonderful holiday to Wicklow, where we enjoyed day trips in Glendalough, Dublin, and

Wexford. The Sunny Southeast treated us very well.

We have also been part of some very interesting and constructive projects. In May, we welcomed Professor Geraldine Brady and Dr. Verusca Calabria from Nottingham Trent University to our office where they carried out a reminiscence session with Survivors. This work is part of a larger Oral History Project, which (dependent on funding) will give Survivors living in the Midlands the opportunity to tell their stories individually, and in their own words. These recordings will then be archived in perpetuity for future generations to listen to and read, ensuring that what happened to Survivors is never forgotten.

We continue to meet regularly with the Department of Children, the Irish Embassy, Patricia Carey (Special Advocate for Survivors of Institutional abuse), and with the three other organisations in Britain supporting Irish Survivors. These meetings serve to maintain contact with decision makers on both sides of the Irish Sea to demand more supports for Survivors. Earlier this year, we worked with Liam Conlon MP on *Philomena's Law*, which (if passed) will support former residents of Ireland's Mother and Baby Homes now living in Britain. The best way to support this is to contact your local MP; we have email/letter templates available for anyone who would like one.

Over the last two months, we have created three new social media accounts for the Midlands Irish Survivors Service. We encourage you all to join us on Facebook, LinkedIn, and X (formerly twitter), where you can stay up to date with our work.

Our talented intern Charlie Byfield created the wonderful promotional film for Coventry Irish Society, which many of you will have seen at our Annual Ball. I had the privilege to contribute to this film, speaking about the importance of the service. Charlie also made another film, interviewing a group of our clients. It is now available to watch on YouTube and can be found on all our social media channels.

Looking to the future, we're working in partnership with Fréa: Renewing Roots, London Irish Centre, and Barnardos Ireland to present an online training webinar on the Irish Government's Action Plan for Survivors taking place on 21st October.

I'll be providing advice on the Payment Scheme on behalf of Coventry Irish Society. The webinar is free to anyone who would like to learn more about these issues. Going into 2026, my goals are to grow the reach of the service, and to raise awareness of the incredibly important work we do here at Coventry Irish Society. Being able to work within our fantastic community every day is such a blessing.

Le grá (with love),
Manisha O'Malley

Caroline Brogan PA to Manager

Dia daoibh a chairde,



I joined the staff team at Coventry Irish in August 2024. I'm so grateful to everyone who has made me so welcome, and who has supported me over the past year, joining the Charity Sector, from the Legal Services Sector, after 25 successful years in Private Practice. I have always wanted to help people, and a career in law was a natural starting point for me; I qualified as a Solicitor in 2006, and my journey took me on a wonderful pathway, including advocating for human rights and the marginalised. I managed free legal advice clinics at the Birmingham Irish Association for several years, which drew me in to volunteering, in my spare time, with Birmingham Irish; eventually spending four years as a Trustee with the Birmingham Irish Association (2019 – 2023), and joining the Executive Committee of The West Midlands Irish Business Group (2020 – Present).

I am very proud of my Irish roots and the diaspora community; my grandad, John Brogan, came to Coventry from Foxford, County Mayo, and worked at The Jag. My nan, Annie Brogan (nee O'Neill) came to Coventry from Drogheda.

I have been learning Irish for several years, which has taken me on a beautiful journey, connecting me with my identity, and our culture and heritage. I was so proud to achieve my *Fáinne Airgid* earlier this year; it means so much to me. It was a huge honour for me to be asked by the Irish Embassy to speak, in Irish, on a panel, alongside former Minister for the Diaspora, Joe McHugh, and Writer, Ciara Broderick, earlier this year, at the Embassy, about learning Irish as an adult and how this can be done. It was another “pinch me moment”, when I was asked by University College Dublin, to give a speech, in Irish, at the launch of this year's Irish Language Summer School. It brings me so much joy to speak and to hear Irish. It was so heartening to see so many people from Coventry, and beyond, join us for the *Lá Mór na Gaeilge* (Irish Language Day) in March, which included a bilingual walking tour of historic Coventry, and to start up a *Ciorcal Comhrá* (Conversation Circle), in September. There are so many more Irish language activities planned, for all levels and all ages. *Ardaíonn sé mo chroí!* (It lifts my heart!)

It's been a fantastic year to be at Coventry Irish, with so many wonderful achievements, from the Irish Ambassador opening our Mo Mowlam Library, to so many important events, including being asked by The Embassy to host *The Peace Heroines Exhibition*, and hosting our Mo Mowlam Afternoon Tea. It is a privilege to have achieved funding, and the trust of The Irish Government's Department of Foreign Affairs' Reconciliation Fund, to manage our “*Project Phoenix*”, which includes advocating The Good Friday Agreement. The Good Friday Agreement is undoubtedly the greatest achievement of our lifetime and it is in our hands to protect it and make sure it is fully implemented.

Le gach dea-ghuí (with every good wish)

Caroline

Siobhan Sexton

Mental Health Worker

Betty's Friends – Dementia Support Group

In July 2025, I joined Coventry Irish Society to take the lead on setting up and running a new dementia support group, hosted by CIS and held weekly at Eaton House. This group was inspired by the much loved Betty Hunter Dementia Group, which had offered a safe and welcoming space for people living with dementia and their carers before Covid.



It has been a real pleasure to re-establish the group in Betty's honour, and I've named it "Betty's Friends" to reflect the warmth, friendship, and sense of community that she created.

Betty's Friends is more than just a support group it's a place where people can connect, share, and feel understood. We also celebrate Irish identity, heritage, and culture, which I believe plays a big part in supporting the wellbeing and sense of belonging for many of our older members.

Each week, we run a mix of activities including gentle exercise, memory games, music, and creative projects. One of our main ongoing activities is the "This Is Me" project, where each member creates a personal record of their life story through photos and memories. It's been lovely to see how this helps people express themselves and strengthens connections within the group.

The feedback so far has been really positive. Members and carers often tell me how much they look forward to coming each week and how much they enjoy the friendly atmosphere. There's always plenty of laughter, tea, and good conversation — it truly feels like a community.

Wellness Walks

As well as running the dementia group, I have also set up a new walking programme called "Wellness Walks." Our weekly walks take place in War Memorial Park and are designed to be low impact and inclusive for everyone.

The walks focus on the importance of gentle exercise to boost energy, improve mood, and support both physical and mental wellbeingwith a good old chat along the way!

We've been running the programme for eight weeks now and already have 15 walkers signed up, with between 5–8 regular attendees each week. It's been lovely to see people enjoying the fresh air, making new friends, and feeling the benefits of staying active together.

We also plan to expand our walks with a new monthly event called "Wellness Ramble." This will be a longer walk in and around Coventry and the surrounding areas, finishing with a social lunch. It's aimed at our more able walkers who want to challenge themselves a little more while still enjoying the friendly, supportive spirit of the group.

Looking ahead, I'd love to continue growing both Betty's Friends and Wellness Walks, reaching more people who could benefit from these activities. I'm especially keen to build stronger links with local GP surgeries, memory clinics, and community organisations so we can share information, support more families, and keep promoting positive wellbeing across our community.

Both projects have quickly become valued parts of Coventry Irish Society, and I'm proud of how far we've come in such a short time. I look forward to building on this success in the year ahead continuing to offer spaces filled with friendship, understanding, and Irish warmth.

I'd like to take the opportunity to Thank everyone at Coventry Irish Society for the warm and friendly welcome since starting my role and I look forward to the year ahead

Siobhan Sexton Mental Health Worker

Grainne Fellowes Digital Officer



Since 2022 I have been working with Coventry Irish Society as Digital Officer, supporting the organisation's digital strategy and ensuring our charity's voice is represented and amplified across our digital suite, including Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn, website, and e-marketing platforms.

This role focuses on using the latest insights to strengthen Coventry Irish Society's digital presence, connect with new audiences and amplify community outreach. Over the past year, this has included:

- Ongoing development and maintenance of the website.
- Digital strategy for our mailing lists and monthly e-newsletter, which now reaches a growing audience of members and supporters.
- Expanding our social media reach by sharing community news, events, and updates from Coventry Irish and our partner organisations.
- Developing a new Instagram platform to diversify the charity's audience development and connect with new audience groups.
- Development of design and brand work for events promotion, including digital flyers, social and web assets

In 2024/5, our monthly e-newsletter continued to thrive thanks to contributions from dedicated volunteers, including **Kate O'Mahony**, whose articles have added great insight and depth to our content. I would also like to thank **Sakal Paul** who has been a fantastic help in providing additional digital support and expertise over the past year.

As we look ahead to 2026, my focus is on further developing our digital platforms to support membership growth for our new family membership, increasing online donations through compelling digital storytelling, and ensuring the voice of Coventry Irish Society is amplified to showcase the breadth and diversity of the Charity's output.

**Le gach dea-ghuí,
Gráinne Fellowes**

Coventry Irish Society Launches Films to Secure Permanent Self Sustaining Irish Heritage Centre

Coventry Irish Society is pleased to announce the publication of 2 new promotional films about the Charity's work with the aim of securing a permanent Irish Heritage Centre.

The films highlight both the current work of the Charity and what the organisation has achieved since the Charity's inception in 1993, including supporting 500 Irish Survivors through Redress.

The films document the impact of the Charity's work from the people that it supports and is a powerful testimony to the vital work of the Charity.

Rory Ryan Coventry Irish Society Chair said "This isn't just Charity, it's an investment in the future. We need a permanent home that allows us to generate our own income and become fully independent and sustainable for decades to come".

The Charity provides health and welfare information, support and advice to the Irish community in Coventry and Warwickshire and the wider Midlands as one of 3 specialist services in Britain supporting Irish Survivors. The Charity specialises in Irish Passports and Citizenship and works with a variety of vulnerable groups including Irish Survivors and Irish Travellers.

The promotional films are available for viewing on YouTube with links to the films on the Charity's website

www.coventryirishsociety.com and its social media sites.

Notes to Editors

The links to the films are on Youtube

Main film

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VsQKS7UCotA>

Irish Survivors Project

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yi7ZDha3SWA>

Statement of Financial Activities 2024

COVENTRY IRISH SOCIETY STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (Incorporating the Income and Expenditure Account For Year Ended December 31 st 2024						
	U Funds	R Funds	2024	U Funds	R Funds	2023
INCOMING RESOURCES						
Donations and Fundraising	17,880		17,880	8,137		8,137
Membership & Sales	10,944		10,944	900		900
Emigrant Support Programme Less Clawback - . Note 2 (2024 = Nil)		93,000	93,000		59,536	59,536
UK Lottery/Covid Grant		18,700	18,700			Nil
Other Grants	200	1,800	2,000		6,131	6,131
Total incoming resources	29,024	113,500	142,524	9,037	65,667	74,704
RESOURCES EXPENDED						
Staff costs (including NI)	8,339	75,051	83,390		76,109	76,109
Survivors' Project		12,945	12,945		2,359	2,359
Gaelic Classes (net cost)	840		840			
Other Projects & Charitable Activities				6,532		6,532
Other expenses and support costs	4,695	4,694	9,389	13,412		13,412
Office Rent/Premises	860	860	1,720		2,325	2,325
Total resources expended,	14,734	93,550	108,284	19,944	80,793	100,737
Surplus/(Deficit) Net outgoing resources	14,290	19,950	34,240	(10,907)	(15,126)	(26,033)

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS: EMIGRANT SUPPORT PROGRAMME

Department of Foreign Affairs: The Emigrant Support Programme received grant of €93,000 for the year from 1st July 2024 to 30th June 2025. The funds were restricted for the following projects: Outreach Project £90,000, Lunch Club £2,000, St. Patrick's Day £1000. Six months of this grant income was utilised in the period to 31st December 2024. Six months grant income amounting to £46,670 has been deferred to the 2025 financial year and will be utilised by 30th June 2025.

Balance Sheet 2024

COVENTRY IRISH SOCIETY - BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31st DECEMBER 2024

	2024		2023	
FIXED ASSETS (Net Book Value) See Note 3 below		15		23
CURRENT ASSETS				
Bank and cash	79,359		47,615	
Total Current Assets				
CURRENT LIABILITIES				
Deferred income (ESP Grant) see Note 2	(46,500)		46,500	
Sundry Creditors	(237)		(845)	
PAYE & NI	(1,237)		(2,020)	
Total Current Liabilities	(47,974)		(49,365)	
Net Current Assets Working Capital	31,385	31,385	(2,865)	(2,865)
TOTAL NET ASSETS/(DEFICIT)		31,398	(2,842)	(2,842)
Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year		34,240		(26,033)
Fund Balances Brought Forward		(2,842)		23,191
Fund Balances Carried Forward		31,398		(2,842)
FUNDS - See Note 4				
Unrestricted funds		84,769		(67,661)
Restricted funds		(53,371)		64,819
TOTAL		31,398		(2,842)

NOTE 3. Taxation

No liability to UK corporation tax arises for the year ended 31st December 2023 nor for any previous periods.

NOTE 4. Funds	Opening Balances 1 st January 2024	Movement in Resources		Closing Balances 31 st December 2024
		In	(Out)	
Unrestricted funds	(67 661)	29,024	(14,734)	(53,371)
Restricted funds	64 819	113,500	(93,550)	84,769
Total Funds	(2 842)	142,524	(108,284)	31,398



Government of Ireland Emigrant Support Programme



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha
Department of Foreign Affairs



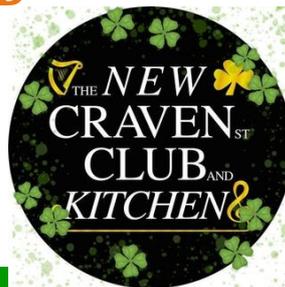
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